

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
Si62b
v. 2

The person charging this material is responsible for its return to the library from which it was withdrawn on or before the **Latest Date** stamped below.

Theft, mutilation, and underlining of books are reasons for disciplinary action and may result in dismissal from the University.

To renew call Telephone Center, 333-8400

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS LIBRARY AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

JAN 22 1982

L161—O-1096



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

BEATRICE;

OR,

THE UNKNOWN RELATIVES.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON :
R. CLAY, PRINTER, BREAD STREET HILL

M. N. C.
BEATRICE;

OR,

THE UNKNOWN RELATIVES.

BY CATHERINE SINCLAIR,

AUTHOR OF

"MODERN ACCOMPLISHMENTS," "HOLIDAY HOUSE," "SIR EDWARD GRAHAM,"
"JANE BOUVERIE," "THE JOURNEY OF LIFE," ETC.

"If authors must write, they had better compose
Their stories too marvellous almost for prose;
Add some incidents, too, which are strange above measure."

Bath Guide.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1852.

BEATRICE.

CHAPTER I.

“May nothing new happen to you.”—*Spanish Compliment.*

LADY EDITH continued to hear occasionally from Lady Stratharden, and every letter plunged her into a deeper gloom respecting Allan, which she did not attempt to conceal from Beatrice, so acutely a sharer in all her sorrow and suspense on his account. It was evident how severely the young girl felt a cessation of all intercourse with the only companion of her childhood, and the dearest object of her affections. Little as she had hoped that circumstances could admit of their union,—and she had schooled her mind into not even wishing it,—still she had never contemplated a sudden termination to their brother-and-sister friendship, which involved a separation for time and eternity of every hope and of every feeling. Now she saw a dark gulf unexpectedly opened between them, that seemed widening every day, and many a tear, as well as many a prayer, testified in secret to the

depth of her anguish at this threatened change. The remembrance of several beautiful hymns which, as children they had learned together, of the chapters they had conned over with Lady Edith, of the catechism they had learned, of the family-prayers in which they had united with Sir Evan, all recurred to the thoughts of Beatrice now with tearful sorrow; but she yet trusted that a foundation of faith, so carefully laid in Allan's mind, would not be easily overthrown; and unaccountable as his endless silence had become, Beatrice hoped against hope, that the principles of Allan as well as his friendship might yet prove unalterable.

Lady McAlpine, like all new converts, was astonishing and perplexing the Pope himself by the wild extremes of her enthusiasm about relics and images, while occupying her whole time in working dresses for the priests, in planning patterns for encaustic tiles, and in singing litanies to the Virgin; evidently in a perfect delirium of spiritual intoxication, believing everything she was told with all her might, and worshipping at random whatever a priest placed before her,—whether a wooden image, or some old instrument of torture, a decayed tooth, or the finger of somebody who perhaps was a saint, and quite as probably not. What influence such a mother had been able to obtain, with the assistance of his guardian-uncle, over Allan, no one could divine, but Lady Strath-

arden wrote that he seemed sunk in the deepest melancholy, his very heart appeared withered, and he had wasted away almost to a shadow, but that the attentions of his mother, his uncle, and tutor, were so assiduous, it was impossible for any one else to become intimately acquainted with him. The only exception to this rule was one of which Lady Stratharden was not herself then aware. Her own daughter, Lady Anne Darlington, an only child, and the heiress to boundless estates, had been secretly admitted with her governess into the very inner sanctuary of Lady M^cAlpine's boudoir, and there, from day to day, when Lady Anne and her governess Miss Turton were supposed to be sketching in the Colosseum or picture-hunting in the Vatican, they were shut up in close conclave with Cardinal Albertini at Lady M^cAlpine's, or singing chants with Sir Allan, become the finest amateur performer at Rome.

Beatrice had now many friends, and even many admirers, though none to whom she gave the slightest encouragement. Clanmarina, which had formerly been as aloof from the general world as Robinson Crusoe's island, or that of Prospero and Miranda, had recently become an object of admiring curiosity to English tourists: therefore the road was occasionally strewn with horsemen, sometimes even a stray chariot whirled up to the pretty little village-inn, and the mail-gig often

enclosed a stranger come to enjoy some days' fishing in the beautiful salmon-stream. Many of these wanderers brought letters to Lady Edith, who, on the slightest hint of a recommendation from any mutual acquaintance, invited them to her most elegant and comfortable of cottages. Those who entered Heatherbrae strangers went away friends, and very frequently the old associates of Sir Evan would wander out of their way in passing through the Highlands, once more to see Lady Edith, and then the days they at first proposed to spend with her extended very frequently to weeks. Such was the charm of Lady Edith's grave, intellectual conversation contrasted with the delightful vivacity of Beatrice, that none ever left off their intercourse at Heatherbrae without regret, and it grew quite a fashion among English tourists to rave about the enchanting scenery and society of Clanmarina.

Thus Beatrice became early accustomed to intelligent conversation on the most improving of all models, with a circle of enlightened friends, living at home, and exchanging at leisure all the thoughts, facts, and feelings, which interested them at the moment; but as time advanced, she and Lady Edith could not but become sensible of an increasing change in both the manner and appearance of their favourite neighbours and associates, Mr. and Mrs. Clinton, who grew daily more reserved and silent, speaking, when they did speak, in a disparaging

tone of their own once-venerated Church. "Scottish Episcopacy is in a state of most apostolical poverty!" observed Mr. Clinton, with a very unusual *soupeçon* of contemptuous dissatisfaction in his voice, one day, "A man of university education and classical attainments is expected to maintain the position of a gentleman, and to bestow the charities of a philanthropist on a professional income such as a land-steward, or even a butler would despise, his chapel no larger than a bathing-machine, and quite as destitute of ornament."

"Yes, Mr. Clinton," replied Lady Edith, kindly; "and I have known one intimately these many years, who has shown what a willing purse can do for the necessities of others, even in preference to his own. Long may a blessing attend, as it has long done, on your active labours!"

"I used to build all my castles in the air with the best cards in the pack, but now the paltry details of economy, and the very limited result of single-handed efforts, are truly discouraging," continued Mrs. Clinton, almost peevishly, for she had the weak side of rather liking expense, and being rather proud of doing so. "A married clergyman must work like a galley-slave. I remember the day when mine was indeed a 'stand-at-ease' life, and when I should have despised all petty savings, but now, even a penny-stamp has become an object requiring my attention."

“Trifles attain to dignity as soon as they become duties,” replied Lady Edith, encouragingly; “your heart, as warm as Midsummer, has always hitherto seemed more than rewarded for ceaseless labour and ceaseless self-denial, by the grateful attachment of your simple-minded congregation, and by the happy fire-side at home, enlivened now by your own two beautiful boys, the finest little fellows I ever saw—

“‘Contented wi’ little, and cantie wi’ mair.’”

“Yes! contented on the most parsimonious chop,” replied Mrs. Clinton, sitting in serious contemplation of her well-worn boots; “if we indulged in a single luxury, or the most trifling extravagance, we should soon see that carpet hanging out of the window, and the sheriffs’ officers taking an inventory of our very scanty effects! Indeed,” added she, jestingly, but with her eyes fixed on her own dark and rather shabby gloves, “every young lady feels competent to be immoderately happy in a curacy upon nothing per annum with the man she likes, but they should all consult me before they make the attempt! How well I remember, at romantic eighteen, lounging over my grand piano and harp in my mother’s splendid boudoir, after a luxurious forenoon-tea, selecting embroidered pocket-handkerchiefs for my *trousseau*, and watered-silk dresses, while talking to a circle of young-lady friends, of the

delight it would be to share a crust of bread, and every sort of curate-comfort, with Edward. We have got on very well together, setting every idea of luxury aside, but it certainly took a long time for me to find out exactly what a crust of bread means. The prose of it is very different from the poetry; but now I no longer despise those who make their own dresses, and wear their bonnets a second season."

"You would probably begin," said Lady Edith, smiling, "with a *trousseau* costing as much as several years' income, engage a first-rate Abigail, and commence life with ideas of strict economy that might be somewhere within two thousand a-year; but it is long before the most romantic young bride comes down to the zero of a few hundreds."

"Yes!" replied Mrs. Clinton, laughing. "Fancy my feelings when first obliged to know the price of a pound of butter, and how much eggs cost a dozen!—taking the key of my own tea-chest, store-room, and linen-press, and making this chintz cover for our only sofa!"

"Well!" replied Lady Edith, kindly. "You have learned the lesson of praiseworthy economy thoroughly now, Mrs. Clinton, after roughing it so cheerfully these many years, and laughing over privations which would have at first seemed incredible. You have done the work of a curate,—and the very best of curates these many years in

this neighbourhood, and I trust your home will always be as happy as you have often made the homes of others."

Allan's old tutor, Mr. Herbert, now Bishop of Inverness, was to preach the following Sunday for Mr. Clinton, and after his arrival he could not withhold his astonishment at several changes which had been recently made in the little chapel once so familiar to him. A pair of gigantic candlesticks now adorned the altar, with the tall wax candles burning in the sunshine, and it was a deep inscrutable mystery to the whole congregation how they came there.

"The gift of a friend," replied Mr. Clinton, colouring deeply, when asked about their origin, and evidently determined to give no explanation. "I should be sorry to remain in the diocese of any bishop narrow-minded enough to object against this ancient custom of the Church."

"Of what Church?" asked Bishop Herbert. "There are practices and doctrines creeping into our Church, Mr. Clinton, so perfectly Popish as, if sanctioned by our Articles, would make me think that Ridley and Latimer must have been martyrs by mistake! Those candles at the altar in our morning-service are a useless decoration that must be removed."

Beatrice, full of pleasant anticipation at the thought of once more hearing the early instructor of her childhood, walked with buoyant animation

beside Lady Edith and the Bishop towards chapel ; her deep azure blue eyes sparkling beneath her cottage bonnet, and her light plaid of the McAlpine tartan fluttering in the breeze over her snow-white dress. Beneath the vivid rays of a resplendent sunshine the autumn leaves spun and quivered in the gale, while Beatrice herself looked smilingly around on the bright landscape, as if her life had been one long sunshiny day of gladness and good-humour. Their path led the party under a long array of overarching oak-trees, hanging beside a glassy stream, which pursued its indolent career towards the ocean in sunshine and shadow for many miles. A thousand marshy wild plants were strewn on the mossy banks, and several large white water-lilies lay like ivory cups upon the blue surface of the river.

At a low white gate, surmounted by the foliage of a venerable tree, which led into part of the Eaglescairn deer-forest, Lady Edith observed the graceful distinguished-looking young man, whom Beatrice had lately by mistake summoned into the garden, leaning over the bars in a careless lounging attitude, lashing down the leaves with his riding-whip and looking particularly inclined to whistle. With an expression of somewhat contemptuous indifference he eyed the clustering groups of country people hurrying earnestly forward, but it was very obvious he had no intention to follow.

The stranger had a wearied look of nothing-to-do ennui. He seemed as if amusement itself could not amuse him, and as if he would willingly have quarrelled with the world, himself, and everybody around, had it not been too much trouble. The incognito was lazily patting one of his two pointers, while indulging in a most luxurious yawn, when suddenly, his eye falling on the brilliant, smiling countenance of Beatrice, he started with visible delight, and his whole aspect became instantly transformed into an expression of respectful admiration.

When the stranger had clandestinely glanced a second time at the surpassingly beautiful Beatrice, as if to assure himself that so lovely a vision was real, his countenance in a moment lost all its vacancy, becoming vivid with animated pleasure. Beatrice meanwhile strolled onward, so occupied in talking to her venerable companion, Bishop Herbert, that she gave a mere passing half-absent glance towards the lounging gentleman at the gate, and proceeded, perfectly unconscious that she had made now, as formerly, an impression of ineffaceable admiration on one who was not usually given to praise.

Scarcely were Beatrice and Lady Edith seated as usual in their pew, before a beadle ushered in the stranger; and it was evident to all concerned that his coming to church must have been rather a sudden idea, as his costume was more suited to the

deer-forest than to the chapel, being a complete suit of border plaid, and even the cap he brought in his hand was of the same material. With a certain air of habitual distinction, he was, nevertheless, a person who might have been met anywhere a hundred times, Lady Edith thought, without his personal appearance exciting a single criticism. He was neither tall nor short, neither fat nor thin, neither dark nor fair nor handsome, and certainly not ugly. His whole aspect was unmistakeably that of a perfect gentleman, and of one so accustomed to be of consequence, that it sat easily and as a matter of course upon him.

Having entered the pew with a look of respectful deference to the ladies, as if asking permission to do so, he seated himself in the only vacant place, next to Beatrice, and occupied his attention in gazing around the church with an air of so much wonder and curiosity, that it seemed almost to Lady Edith as if he had never been in one before, which conjecture became more and more confirmed by his subsequent conduct and aspect. There appeared a general air of supercilious contempt in his dark scornful eyes after having completed this survey, of the plain neat unadorned building, and with a rather disdainful smile, he folded his arms, sat back, and looked exceedingly bored. Still he glanced occasionally with an expression of clandestine interest at Beatrice, though, after waiting a

few minutes till the service began, he became so restlessly impatient, that there seemed every probability of his hurriedly departing. When the congregation stood up to begin, Lady Edith so far did the honours of her pew as to offer the stranger her prayer book, which he politely accepted, and immediately made a vain attempt to find the places. He dived into the middle, then looked at the title-page, ran his eye over the list of contents, tried again, and at length with a look of polite entreaty held it out to Beatrice, who, blushing with surprise, opened up the right place, and quietly returned it to him. After this, for several minutes all went right, but again he was completely at a loss ; therefore, closing the volume, and giving a shrug of despairing indifference, he contented himself afterwards, with merely standing, sitting, or kneeling as others did, with mechanical precision.

When the appointed chapters were about to be read, the stranger, seeing Beatrice's large Bible open on the desk, bent forward that they might read it together, which secretly astonished her ; and in any other place, she would have felt actually diverted at the sort of easy gentlemanlike assurance with which he made himself so completely at home among those to whom his very name was unknown. The stranger's singing too, when he joined in the hymns, appeared beautiful beyond description, as the quality of his voice was so rich, deep, and full,

that Beatrice had never heard its equal for pathos, melody, and expression, while he had evidently both science and taste.

When the venerable Bishop began his sermon, Beatrice could not but perceive that the stranger's countenance continued to wear the aspect of listless indifference with which he had observed the whole service, and that he looked with clandestine impatience at his watch; but when the aged Prelate proceeded solemnly to describe the soul's journey from time to eternity, his attention became gradually enchained. Eyes that had seemed quenched in weariful ennui awoke by degrees to life, and the incognito at last listened with rapidly increasing interest, till in the end his whole spirit was obviously aroused, his very soul brightened in a very expressive countenance, and he was evidently entranced while listening with intense attention to what seemed new, as well as deeply interesting to one who obviously appreciated at its great value the talent and piety of the venerable preacher.

When the Bishop, old and full of years, in a voice of majestic energy and pathos, announced the sublime and holy tenets of his church, the words rolled forth with a pomp and power of intellectual eloquence which riveted the imagination, convinced the judgment, and gained the heart of every individual who listened. Long and thoughtfully he inculcated a deep study of the infallible Scrip-

tures, which speak to the universal heart of human nature, being clear and sublime as nature itself. The same Great Being, he said, was the author of both, making both so easy to the simplest understanding that a child can find enough in either for the nourishment of life, though in each there are depths and mysteries, which ages of study by the wisest heads cannot entirely fathom. The Bishop aroused the highest and noblest emotions of which the human heart can be conscious, and to which every human heart must respond, while proving that all which is founded on Bible truth in the Romish system is equally held by Protestants; who reject only, with a just abhorrence, the disfiguring excrescences engrafted on the sound body of truth by Papists, who endeavoured to subvert the sacred volume while keeping it from general readers, and teaching that all faith or morals consist in a blind, unquestioning, slavish obedience to the priest.

“The Jesuits,” he said, “now rule in the Vatican; for even the Pope obeys the Jesuit Cardinals, who kiss his foot but tie his hands, while their object is to enthrall the free and intellectual population of Great Britain under the same iron yoke of ignorance, idolatry, and real infidelity as Italy, Portugal, Spain, and other countries, drenched in guilt and superstition.”

When the Bishop’s eloquent voice became hushed there followed a solemn silence that might be felt,

while the congregation seemed unwilling to let their attention be released from the influence of a mind so commanding in its power, so rousing in its appeals, and so majestic in its kindest sympathies.

While a collection took place after service for the village library and schools, Beatrice observed the glitter of gold in the stranger's hand, as he clandestinely dropped in his contribution, and soon after he followed, with an air of thoughtful gravity, when the congregation slowly dispersed. They streamed out from the church without looking up or speaking, for each individual was impressed by the venerable Bishop's sacred admonitions, so that they felt a newly awakened consciousness how awful is life, with its responsibilities, its fears, and even its hopes, and "what a mystery to man is man."

Lady Edith and Beatrice were exchanging recollections of much in the sermon, by which they had been peculiarly interested, in explanation of those venerable certainties which they hoped never to forget, when their lingering thoughtful steps were overtaken by the stranger, who politely opened the church-yard gate to let them pass, and bowing with the easy self-importance of one accustomed always to be cordially welcomed, he said,

"May I be permitted, Lady Edith, to escort you towards home? Do not, I entreat you, consider

mine a case of Popish aggression, though this has been in fact, my first appearance within any Protestant church,—not, I hope, my last. You must have perceived that the service was new to me, and shall I add, very interesting. The majestic simplicity of an intellectual service, unaccompanied by incense, images, pantomime and repetitions, was new to one like myself, long accustomed to Italian Cathedrals, and long wearied of Italian mummeries, where I never heard any preacher fit to dot the *i*'s, or to stroke the *t*'s of our venerable friend to-day."

"You are lately from abroad?" asked Lady Edith, with polite curiosity.

"Yes! I arrived by a most romantic conveyance last week—the mail-gig," replied the incognito, with a humorous glance to Beatrice. "But," he continued, in a tone of perfect frankness, and of some gravity, "my motives in going to church were not so serious as my feelings in coming away. Let me acknowledge that, having been disgusted at Rome lately by the fooleries of a monastic establishment into which I was inveigled, and with all the frivolous baubles and purchased indulgences offered me if I would become a superstitious devotee, I have found that the best cure for Romanism is a residence at Rome."

"No wonder!" observed Lady Edith: "a Papist buying absolutions might well say, 'I cannot afford

to keep a conscience,' and there are very few people who do, after they have begun to buy pardons for their sins as they would buy envelopes for their letters."

"At Rome infidelity abounds even more than popery," added the stranger. "In my present state of mind, with every confidence in religion shaken to its very centre, my first visit to a Protestant church to-day has shown me how reason and intellect may be united with a dignified simplicity in devotion, worthy of man and his Maker. This may, therefore, be the most fortunate day of my life, which has laid the foundation-stone of our acquaintance, and many yet happier hours for me might follow if you will allow of my improving our introduction into an intimacy."

"But," replied Lady Edith, looking round with astonished though good-humoured perplexity, at her free and easy companion, "there has been no introduction yet, and I cultivate no acquaintances except those introduced to me by mutual friends."

"Quite right! I shall bring my testimonials printed to-morrow. Lord Eaglescairn, who knows all the world, knows even me!" replied the stranger, humorously. "Meanwhile, as nothing on earth is so awkward as the sound of one's own name, and as I am the very shyest of mortals, pray let me continue for to-day, 'The Great Unknown,' or shall I call myself, if you insist on a

name, Mr. Cornelius O'Brien? In my own boyhood, years ago, I delighted to make acquaintances, just like running against a post, by accident. My chief pleasure was to read about handsome, romantic looking incognitos, and I have a whim of being one myself now!"

"Then," replied Lady Edith, much diverted at seeing a young man evidently on such good terms with the world, himself, and everybody, "I must, for one day, be very unfastidious, and endure a companion whose name is never heard. You seem quite on the model of Malvolio, 'melancholy and gentlemanlike.'"

"Precisely! There is an air of mystery in my nameless state to-day quite enchanting. I am the lost Pleid," said the stranger, assuming a lamentable tone; "An interloping stranger! I am just not ugly, and just not mad; yet, believe me, I keep a gig, and am quite respectable!"

"You look so," replied Lady Edith, with a sly glance at the stranger's rather weatherbeaten shooting dress; "people in their Sunday clothes are seen to great advantage."

"I have been reforming my tailor's bill," said the incognito, looking himself over with a laugh of good-humoured hilarity, and then smiling to Beatrice, as if sure of her sympathy in being so attacked by Lady Edith. "You do not admire my costume! I never wished you to admire it.

I should be very sorry if any one did. People will invariably admire me, in spite of all I can do to prevent them, but to-day I really do flatter myself that I have succeeded in being hideous."

"Wonderfully, if that be your object," replied Lady Edith, slily. "We thought your costume was in the newest fashion, being as ignorant in my cottage-home of all the changes taking place in the dress or politics of the great world, as a country Post-Office."

"Then you have made a great hit to-day! I am a living Court Circular and Gazetteer. I am 'our own correspondent' to the *Morning Post*, and first cousin, five times removed, to one of Her Majesty's Lords in Waiting."

"How particularly condescending in you then, to notice us, and still more to enlighten me with your superior information," replied Lady Edith, more and more amused at the cool audacity of her companion's manner. "Pray give us a learned dissertation on the character and prospects of the Man in the Moon."

"Certainly, I am born with a remarkable facility for doing everything useless, therefore you have hit off what will exactly suit my genius."

To Beatrice, the stranger's rallying, gentleman-like self-confidence, was, beyond measure, amusing; while she grew more and more convinced that he held no ordinary position in society. There was

an air of high hereditary distinction, almost of hauteur in the habitual expression of his consequential looking features, but so qualified by the sportive vivacity of his manner, that his unadulterated nonsense was piquante and pleasing in the extreme, while she became delighted to see Lady Edith restored to some of her former vivacity, by this rencontre with one so odd and original.

“Now,” continued the stranger, “every man has one subject on which he excels, and my forte at present, being so lately returned from abroad, and speaking several dozen of languages with ease, is to enlighten people on foreign politics, you understand. Do I make myself quite intelligible?”

“Perfectly so; but that is not a subject on which I bestow much thought. One must, in this wide world, remain ignorant of something,” answered Lady Edith. “My little pittance of mind cannot embrace the whole universe of knowledge, therefore I do not often trouble myself with the affairs of all nations. Foreigners know best themselves how they wish to be governed, and will not consult my wisdom.”

“Though you are, I have no doubt, wiser than the wisest of them,” replied the stranger jestingly, “I am, myself, a perfect fanatic in politics; and have an undeveloped genius which will one day fit me to be prime minister—or, at least, a clerk at the Admiralty.”

“ Since you have such a blaze of intellect, you should offer yourself as tutor to the royal children,” said Lady Edith. “ You may give us a little sensible nonsense now concerning the elections, and tell us a few state secrets about our political affairs. It is months since I have seen a real, live politician.”

“ Do you prefer the melancholy agricultural-distress line, or the glut of gold-vein ?” asked the stranger. “ Some people say, that England’s prosperity is all fictitious, but certainly the prevalence of fictitious prosperity now is quite startling. Shops are enlarging, rents are rising, merchants are buying estates, customers are spending extravagantly, and even rail-roads are occasionally paying a half per cent. dividend ! If we suffer a few more such years of fictitious prosperity, it will be vastly agreeable ! I shall certainly call for a *Da Capo* and sit down to enjoy it !”

“ You have studied the deepest depths of political economy, I perceive !”

“ No one has ever yet measured my depth. I am at the bottom of every art and science, from thimble-rig to political economy. I can remember or forget anything on the shortest notice, as it suits me ; and am determined to know nothing in life but what is pleasant. My next publication shall be an octavo volume, to show how the poor can be made to feel happier than the rich, and to keep their carriages. I have invented a machine

for grinding old people young again, and I could even stand being examined for a commission in the guards, though that is now a next to impossible ordeal. My cousin, Jack Dawson, was desired to turn John Gilpin into Greek iambs, and to recapitulate according to their ages the names of Queen Anne's thirteen children who died infants: he had to tell in what year Priam was born, and who were all the prime ministers in Europe coeval with Cardinal Wolsey."

"That signifies little to any mortal now alive, certainly; and, I dare say, very few of the heroes at Waterloo could have answered," observed Lady Edith. "Young people's intellects are all annihilated by excessive examining, and I almost think too little learning better than too much. I knew one young officer, who fought like a lion, and was the most original entertaining observer of life and manners in the world, yet, when asked if England were ever conquered by a foreign foe, he answered with admirable correctness, 'Yes! by the Spanish Armada.'"

"Some of these questions are of no more real use than if you were desired to name the exact number of the Hansom cab, in which I went last week to the opera; and I do think when any young candidate is plucked, like my poor cousin Jack Dawson, a list should be published of the questions that extinguished him. At present the

examiners can bamboozle any one and reject him, which gives them a most arbitrary power. They could puzzle Babbage in arithmetic, or even myself in history."

"You are a perfect Macaulay I suppose?" asked Lady Edith smiling, "and ready for first class honours in Hume and Gibbon."

"Not exactly. My favourite historians are Shakspeare, Waverley, and some of the new operas; Lucrezia Borgia, for instance, and Marie Stuart. Pray," added the stranger, turning to Beatrice, "how do you like 'Les Huguenots?' and are you an admirer of Jenny Lind?"

"I never was at an opera in my life," replied Beatrice, blushing with graceful timidity on finding herself addressed; while the stranger watched with clandestine admiration the little conflict of shyness and amusement which brightened her countenance, as she added, "I should like much to hear Jenny Lind for once."

"Then comfort yourself for not having seen her, that life has still something to show. It is a perfect trance of delight the first time, but I tired even of her, as I do of everybody and of everything. One goes to the opera to be bored, rather than stay to be bored at home. If anything can add a feather to the wing of time it is a help!"

"You are a second Byron," observed Lady Edith, smiling at the disconsolate tone of helpless weariness in which her young companion spoke.

"Sated abroad, all seen but nought admired,
The weary spirit is driv'n to wander home,
Sated at home, of wife and children tired,——"

"No! no! pardon me! the wife and children are a source of weariness yet to come," interrupted the incognito, stealthily watching the effect of his unmitigated nonsense in lighting up the lovely young countenance of Beatrice with smiles of wondering amusement. She looked as if it would take a week to recover her gravity, for he was a new variety in human nature to Beatrice, who had never before seen a perfectly satiated man of fashion, with apparently not a thing to wish for or to do, except talking nonsense *au naturel*.

"There is an awkward corner in every man's life, when he first discovers, like me, that among the many roads in life, he has not chosen the best. The fact is," he added pettishly, "that after wandering for years over the uncivilized world, I am a tired bird wearily looking for a quiet perch, and come to try the greatest of all varieties to me—staying at home. I am actually planning now to settle in Great Britain!"

"That means probably," said Lady Edith, "three months in this country and the other nine

elsewhere ! The habit of vagabondizing abroad is like the habit of taking snuff, which cannot be left off."

" You are perhaps right. I must return occasionally to Florence, the ' City of flowers ;' I must wander sometimes in the dusky forests of Vallambrosa, and stroll now and then in the fair gardens of Pratolino, adorned as they are and guarded by the gigantic Padre Apennino of antediluvian memory. Still, though everything in life is a bore, it sounds very well to my romantic ear, the domestic peace of a British home, in such a little duodecimo cottage as that before us ; which looks as if it had been copied out of a young lady's album, or off a China plate."

" Take care what you say, for that little rose-covered hut, which you once visited before, is mine," interrupted Lady Edith gaily. " We shelter our little home with an umbrella, water it with a watering pot, and rake up the garden with a silver fork."

" What a perfect gem it is ! more like the vision of a dream than a solid reality," exclaimed the stranger with unaffected admiration. " It is very seldom in two or three life-times one sees anything so thoroughly pretty ! There are more brilliant bouquets in that tiny space than in the conservatory at Eaglescainn, and the roses seem all to flower with their whole hearts. Here you appear

to have the usual English neighbourhood, invariably found in one's travels everywhere. The grand dull old feudal castle such as Eaglescain, the county-member family, like the McAlpines at Cairngorum Castle,—and the 'cottage of gentility,' well worth them all. Were I transplanted into such a more than beautiful home as yours, might I not forget at last, in such refined enjoyment, that among the brightest flowers in the garden of this world I am myself only a weed?"

The young man's voice became saddened as he spoke, and his countenance for some moments assumed an aspect of seriousness; but suddenly shaking this off, he looked laughingly at Beatrice, saying, "I see a smile of the prettiest disdain hiding itself under a straw-bonnet at this moment, which is very distressing to my vanity. You must not, however, mistake me for Lord Hate-good, and become Miss Much-afraid! No: take the benefit of my long experience, and believe that all the most agreeable friendships are made as to-day, without introductions, and that ours will turn out inestimable. There is a sort of stolen pleasure in impromptu acquaintances, that gives a zest of romance to the most casual stranger's society. *A propos* to nothing—did you ladies ever happen by chance to see young Sir Allan McAlpine, whose property lies in this neighbourhood?"

How strange that accidental question sounded

in the ear of Lady Edith, and yet more so in that of Beatrice! Did she ever see Allan? Her own beloved Allan! The inseparable companion of her childhood! He who had once wished to devote to her his whole remaining life!

Before Beatrice had arranged all her thoughts and feelings on the subject, Lady Edith replied in the affirmative, and asked the stranger with anxious curiosity in return, if he also was a friend of Sir Allan's?

"Oh! most intimate. He was never out of my sight, until this unlucky whim somehow suggested itself to him, of becoming either a Jesuit priest or a monk of La Trappe, taking a cord and cross instead of a belt and sword. His mother, you know, is a widow. I do not wonder at that, as no man could survive long with so tiresome a woman; and she would sacrifice her son to Moloch, if the doing so pleased her favourite cardinal. His sermons are like thunderbolts from the pulpit, but in conversation with ladies Albertini becomes gentle, tender and insinuating, while no mortal woman, old or young, can resist so charming a contrast. Fancy his majestic voice and princely appearance, glittering in robes of state, with hundreds of eyes admiringly fastened upon him in the pulpit, and then all the scarlet and gold, all the pomp and circumstance laid aside for a *tête-à-tête* with little Lady McAlpine, the most tiresome

prattler in Rome, whose society every other mortal avoids. She has the digestion of an ostrich for swallowing every Popish fable, and there is no wild or frantic action in life which she could not do to please her own particular cardinal, who flatters and laughs at her to his heart's content, as I happen to know!"

"I wonder at both Sir Allan's uncle and mother conspiring against him," said Lady Edith in a tone of mournful musing. "Mr. Ambrose indeed has long torn himself root and branch from every human tie, and has no scruple in tearing up those of others; but for a mother to wish that her only son should become a solitary unit in the creation, giving up all the dearer connexions of life,—it is incredible!"

"These sly Papists got hold of my friend McAlpine while his heart was wrung with grief for a kind uncle, of whom he used to tell me many interesting anecdotes,—a very worthy man I do not doubt; but nobody's uncles live for ever, and why should he? Sir Allan burying himself out of the world will not bring Sir Evan back to it! Since McAlpine took this Jesuitical turn, however, we have been as every way different as the black and white kings on a chess-board. I thought it a duty to myself to avoid his society, for these things are so catching that the victims should be put under quarantine. Are you con-

descending enough to agree with me? I see you are, and that confirms my original opinion of your superlative good sense; but my account of M^cAlpine seems to have brought you to what the Americans call 'a dead stare.'

Lady Edith and Beatrice felt secretly so overwhelmed by this perfectly authentic confirmation of their worst apprehensions respecting Allan, that not a word or an exclamation had escaped from the lips of either. Beatrice nevertheless became livid as death, and leaned heavily on the arm of her greatly agitated benefactress; and still the rattling stranger rattled carelessly on, little heeding the sensation caused by his eccentric nonsense.

"I believed in the liquefying of the blood of St. Januarius and such conjuring tricks once, though I cannot now and never shall."

"The power of chemistry is marvellous," replied Lady Edith. "Drawings done with sensitive ink, that appear and disappear, would seem to any uninstructed peasant quite supernatural."

"Yes!" replied the young stranger; "and did you ever see Monsieur Robin produce twelve different liquids from one bottle? In fact, the priests when trying to make me believe in winking pictures and in solid chapels flying to Rome through the air, have ended,—low be it spoken,—in making me believe nothing marvellous that they can assert about St.

Bridget or St. Dominick. I fell at once from Romanism to Indifferentism. Still, ass as I am, I can bray sensibly enough sometimes, and it does grieve me to think that this fine old castle will so soon belong to the monks. They are persuading M^cAlpine that he should hack and tear every tie of earthly affection, that he must overrun this little village with proselyting priests, that he must give wooden images instead of Bibles to your simple clansmen, and that being the last heir of entail to this property, his imperative duty is to restore this whole estate to the Papal Church."

"I never give my opinion upon any subject! never; but I do say that monks and nuns should be rendered incapable of succeeding to fortunes or estates; for it is not they who acquire them, but the foreign priest to whom they are no relations but blinded slaves," said Lady Edith. "If what you say be true of Sir Allan, he has sold himself body and soul to the Pope. Clanmarina is no more his property than it is mine; for Father Eustace will leave not a feather unplucked from his wing."

"The priests know M^cAlpine's value to a shilling, and well have they laid the trap," replied the stranger in a tone of bitter satire. "I saw, during my farewell visit to M^cAlpine, who always was one degree too good for this world, a plan before him of the gorgeous chapel to be built here for Presbyterian Papists, soon and certainly

to be converted by fair means or by very foul ones. They were trying to persuade him that it would be a sin to marry some charming young girl,—a perfect vision of muslin, lace, ringlets, and blue ribbons, with whom M^cAlpine as an almost boy had exchanged bouquets and vows of constancy, and had finally deposited his heart before leaving home. I am told he was rather obstinate with the monkish uncle upon that point:—

“ ‘ They had lived and loved together,
Through many changing years ;
They had smiled each other’s smiles,
And wept each other’s tears ! ’ ”

Lady Edith suppressed a groan of anguish, and clasped more closely to her side the arm of Beatrice which quivered with emotion, but she articulated a few words to encourage her communicative companion in his heedless volubility, while he little guessed the powerful sensations of grief and astonishment which his words were creating, and which rushed like a stormy wind through the agitated mind of Beatrice, prostrating in sorrowful desolation every hope that was dearest to her in life.

“ In no foreign Cathedral, full of paintings, music and perfumes, did I ever feel my own mind so healthily ventilated, or so brightly illuminated with the clear daylight of truth, so called into vivid action, or so seriously impressed with a

consciousness of immortality, as by the quiet intellectual service to-day, not directed to my bodily senses but to my invisible soul ;” continued the stranger in a tone of reflection that became him well. “ Your worthy Bishop announced his intention to receive at the schoolroom to-morrow those of the congregation who wish to hear some discussions respecting my own Romish Church,—or let me rather say the Church to which my family belong,—for I scarcely dare assert that, in my careless way of thinking, I belong to any church :—

“ ‘ I have cast off the clue of this world’s maze,
And, like an idiot, let my boat adrift
Above the waterfall ; ’

nevertheless, I shall do myself the justice to hear what so gifted and good a man as your Bishop has to say. No one would be less willing than myself to be left behind, like an old hound, when the field is mustered.”

The young sportsman gracefully lifted his hat above his head with a farewell look of polite admiration at Beatrice, and stood with it in his hand until both ladies, their thoughts full of grief for Allan, wished him a cordial but agitated farewell, and closing the little white gate that led into the garden they hurriedly vanished.

There appeared an inimitable grace in the young

stranger's most ordinary bow, while the expression on his face was a tessellated mixture of humour and respect; but it was scarcely observed by the ladies, as words would be wasted in an attempt to describe what were their increased feelings of anguish the longer they considered the mournful but only too authentic account of Allan's most calamitous perversion to Romanism. It was no mere personal grief that now caused their bitterest affliction, but Lady Edith and Beatrice thought on the loss to Allan for both worlds, of all that could give him happiness in life now, and hope in life hereafter. The tremendous importance attached by each to the pure faith of the unadulterated Scriptures, rendered their grief on Allan's account almost boundless, and the thought also stung them to the very soul of that deep adversity, that persecuting proselytism, doomed soon to fall on Clanmarina. There the firmness of every Protestant was inevitably to be tested by all the influence of artifice, persuasion, and authority, so that Lady Edith felt as if all her labour of years to enlighten those who would be enlightened had been bestowed on a mere phantom of hope. It appeared to Beatrice a frightful dream that Allan—her own beloved Allan—should be the person whose influence over Clanmarina hereafter Lady Edith would most have to fear, and whose altered principles must render him an alien to her own

confidence and affection, and a willing victim to that delusive superstition by which body and soul are confiscated as slaves to the will of another, extinguishing even the high and holy privilege of thought.—

“ ’Tis a base
Abandonment of reason, to resign
Our right of thought—our last and only place
Of refuge ; this at least shall still be mine.”

Byron.

CHAPTER II.

"Thus men go wrong with an ingenious skill,
Bend the straight rule to their own crooked will;
And with a clear and shining lamp supplied,
First put it out, then take it for their guide."

COWPER.

WHEN Beatrice thought over all that had been revealed respecting Allan, she felt as if suffering in a painful trance from which she could not awaken. Her well-regulated mind had always most carefully banished every hope connected with Allan's more peculiar attachment to herself, because the conviction was engrained into her very being that the friendless orphan, who owed life and all things to Sir Evan, could best show her gratitude to his memory by attending to what she believed had been his intentions, that she and Allan should be no more to each other than brother and sister friends: but very bitter tears were mingled with her prayers for one, now and always the dearest object of her unacknowledged affections. Long after did the thought of his apostasy steal away the bloom from her cheek, the lustre from her eye,

and the buoyancy from her step. In the simple life of Beatrice it was a great and most impressive event next day, and full of pleasant excitement, when she found herself at the school-room with Lady Edith to meet the Bishop, whose high strain of eloquence on the previous day yet reverberated on her ear and on her heart. His conversation with Lady Edith and Mr. Clinton was full of life and without a thought of display, abounding in keen observation, in classical elegance, and in that deep experience of the world and of mankind, gathered in a long life of active duty.

The Bishop's refined aspect formed a striking contrast to the homely intelligence in the countenances of the farmers and peasants assembled from afar, to whom he had been long known and by whom he was most deeply venerated. By degrees a circle became formed beside the Bishop, while Beatrice, glancing round to see how all the party were placed, saw in the most distant corner of the room a pair of the brightest eyes in the world fixed on herself with a look of unmistakeable admiration which brought a scarlet blush to her cheek. The singular young stranger of the previous day was evidently crouching out of sight, as if conscious of having placed himself in a false position by coming at all to this congregational meeting assembled to welcome their old pastor, and yet he was evidently most anxious not to lose a word that might fall

from the Bishop, who now addressed those nearest him, saying in a tone of cheerful benignity,—

“ You have often heard, my friends, of that most respectable individual, ‘the oldest inhabitant.’ Perhaps I am not only the oldest in Clanmarina, but in the kingdom, seeing that more than eighty-six years of deep experience have taught me its dangers and its sorrows, till nothing now is left me but the undying hope of a world to come. Who does not often ask himself,—Why are we brought into this world, and why are we taken out of it? Life is an awful gift, which we have each received, and must each sooner or later resign; but mine has now reached its latest verge. Years and infirmities tell me that this must probably be my last visit to so distant a part of my diocese; and before the grave closes between me and every earthly duty, I have desired once more to warn you all of the evils and dangers fast approaching your own homes. I cannot live to share them with you, but I would willingly die to-morrow to shield you and all those I love from such perplexities as are approaching. The curtain of history is now rising over a deep tragedy, in which every true-hearted Briton must bear a part, to defend or to lose his all. An Italian flag has been unfurled within the heart of our great metropolis, and bold defiance bid to our laws and religion, therefore all must now be actively true to the flag of old

England. Like Thomas à Becket, a Cardinal asserts in England now the right divine of Popes, to govern wrong, and would have you build on the most fatal of quicksands your hope for time and for an endless eternity——”

The stranger, evidently roused to the deepest interest, now stole out from his obscure retreat and noiselessly placed himself close behind Lady Edith, in a position more advantageously to see and hear the venerable old Bishop, whose voice for one short moment faltered with emotion; but instantly recovering himself, he continued in a tone of dignified firmness, till his eye in glancing from face to face suddenly rested on the young stranger, when with a start of evident astonishment he paused, looked again, and became obviously much perplexed.

During the whole of his subsequent address, the Bishop's attention seemed again and again fixed with wondering interest on the distinguished looking young stranger, to whom at length he seemed almost entirely to direct his words; for the incognito's eyes appeared to exercise the fascination of a serpent over all who once caught his brilliant glance, while the whole expression of his countenance became instinct with genius and vivacity.

“It becomes daily more evident, my friends,” continued the Bishop, “from the silent progress

of Jesuitism during the last few years in this country, that once again there must hereafter be a death-struggle in Britain for the possession of your Bibles and of your consciences. Men who are indifferent on the subject will tell you, that our ancient adversary the Pope is now a mere wandering old priest, obliged lately to escape from his own subjects disguised as a livery servant, and who is yet protected only by the bayonets of a foreign republic; but Sinbad's Old Man of the Sea will very soon be re-acted in this country, if we trust in such plausible representations. The Pope seems crippled in all his resources, and yet never for centuries has his power been so influential in England as at this moment; and the danger you have all to apprehend is not from the open honest warfare of soldiers on a battle-field, or its extent might be measured and avoided. No! it is the clandestine, the marvellous but imperceptible expansion of the Jesuits around us which ought to be feared, and their masquerading manœuvres, while Protestants sleep on in a vague ignominious dream of safety. The warfare of opinions and principles is stealing surreptitiously into the family circle of many a husband and parent, who believes he has fortified his home and his children impreguably against jesuitical influence; but let all now make assurance doubly sure."

"Right enough!" muttered the stranger aside

to Lady Edith and Beatrice. "The Jesuits are like the lily of the valley; once planted, no power of man can trace their progress or entirely root them out. They grow and spread in all directions, silently and unnoticed, appearing always where least expected, and not very much wanted."

"A Dean of our Church once said," replied Lady Edith, in an under tone, "that the Pope, when weeding his garden, throws the worst weeds over our English wall, and there are tears in many a family now which would sorrowfully testify to their progress."

"In Europe," whispered the stranger, "there are more than a million of priests,—a Popish militia, thoroughly trained and most skilfully drilled, with no other earthly tie but their order, who form an invisible army, with which the Pope is gaining victories every day. His chief energy in recent times is directed to the wealthy English, who are entrapped by secret devices, strange beyond the wildest dreams of romance. One young and beautiful cousin of mine is nibbling now towards the bars of a convent, and I tell her, if once she enters the confessional, such an insight will be gained into her character and secret thoughts, that there will remain no limit to the power of Father Eustace to seduce or to terrify her. She will, I greatly fear, break her mother's heart, and soon abandon every divinely appointed

duty, to be employed in working dresses for the priests, and in making delirious proselytes like herself."

"Careless men," continued the Bishop earnestly, "consider this a mere question of religion for the clergy, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing to general society; but no! it is an attempt, my friends, on the part of Rome, chiefly through female influence, to gain in this country supreme power, as well as unlimited wealth. This the Popish priest will succeed at last in doing, unless the Protestant garrison, aware that they have adversaries within and without, be each man at his post, as alert to defend as the assailants are to attack. Their opponents seek not religious equality but political predominancy; therefore it is the interest even of infidels to maintain the independent dignity of man as his God created him, relying, we Protestants believe, on the guidance, not of men or angels, but of God's own Spirit, and of God's own word."

"Very different from the frauds, the deceptions, and the juggler's tricks I have seen at Rome, to entice and deceive wealthy and weak-minded converts;" muttered the stranger indignantly between his teeth, while the aged Bishop paused to recover himself. "Their slavery becomes worse than that of the negroes, for no despotism on earth is equal to that of a Popish priest usurping the place of

God. The Inquisition is in very full work at Rome even now, and most justly has it been called 'The Master-piece of Satan.'"

"Many a voice from the grave will hereafter testify to that," said Lady Edith, thoughtfully: "and the Convents are little better! Those who practise confession there, have quite enough soon to confess. It is a doctrine of Molinos, a Jesuit, that humility being the ladder to heaven, every crime a penitent commits, by humbling him, forms a step."

"Think not, my friends," continued the Bishop, "that these warnings of impending danger to your religion are the produce of an over-anxious mind. You hear now the deliberate opinion of one whose own work on earth is done, but whose last public address to each and all of his former flock is one solemn injunction. Were you to hear for certain that the plague will devastate this village to-morrow, or that an invasion of foreign soldiers is to take place here to-day, or that an enemy's fleet is anchored in your bay, or that an earthquake will level your houses to the ground in an hour, still take courage, for your eternal all is not yet jeopardized and much might remain. Mutual confidence and affection would enable you to bear the worst together, and your expectation of being re-united in a better world might make even a separation full of hope. Let your deepest fears,

then, be reserved and your most anxious precautions taken against those Thugs of Christendom, who murder the soul by steeping it in crime as an act of devotion."

"Yes," muttered the stranger, "and the Smithfield fires are as much a part of those people's religion as the candles on their altars as soon as they can dare to light either or both."

"There is a coming struggle before you," continued the venerable Bishop, "against a power, the triumph of which would take from yourselves and your children all innocent natural enjoyments, the gifts of a benevolent God to his own people. Beware of that foreign priest who would confiscate your very souls, along with your bodies and minds, —who would embezzle your fortunes, destroy your liberties, and who would induce you to shut yourselves up in monastic cells, excluding the light of day, the freedom of thought, the use of speech, ease of body, and refreshment from sleep. He would interpose a priest between you and the confidence of your wife, the obedience of your children, even the right to utter truth itself if an evasion would better serve this Papal usurpation. My friends, had our all-powerful God required such wretched automatons with nothing in them but obedience, a set of puppets, the wires and strings all managed by priests, would He not at once have formed so inferior a race of slaves, rather than

giving us the glorious light of conscience, of thought and of intellect, bid us extinguish them all in the dark waters of Popish oblivion ? ”

“ Prodigiouslly true,” said the stranger, turning for the first time to Beatrice, in a tone of animated frankness. “ In my own family, the Papists have begun, as in old times, their death-bed robberies of the old, when dying men, instead of seeing a pistol held to their heads, have the horrors of an imaginary purgatory presented to their terrified imaginations. Last month, when I was absent, the Jesuits very nearly frightened my aged uncle into disinheriting me. The conspiracy seemed within five minutes of succeeding: it really was neck and neck between me and the Jesuits. The good old soul died, pen in hand, before his will was completely signed ; and I really think he did it on purpose, for I was a great favourite.”

The countenance of Beatrice became illuminated with a smile of such intelligent interest, that the stranger continued to rattle on at a hand-gallop, with his laughing eyes fixed on her smiling features, as he added, “ Now, my worthy uncle used only some months ago to rave against the priests, and tell me that the only object for which he would accept a seat in Parliament was, to bring in a Bill of his own. It provided that when monks and nuns became dead to the world by taking monastic vows, all their property should go immediately to

their nearest sane relation. Stringent laws can alone protect old men like my uncle, or wealthy young ladies like my cousin, against being victimized by that red man from Rome."

Parliament having been recently dissolved, a general election was expected about this time to take place. Every borough and county was to be keenly contested, every seat disputed; and nothing could exceed the excitement produced by the two watchwords of party feeling, always the most exciting to a Scottish mob,—“No Popery!” and “Cheap Bread!” The most virulent feelings of opposition had always been prevalent in Clanmarina against Lord Eaglescairn’s candidate, whoever or whatever he might be; and no words could describe the contemptuous disbelief with which the Cairngorum tenantry received an assertion from Father Eustace, that a candidate was coming from abroad whom they would all unanimously support, in accordance with a nomination from the steward of Lord Eaglescairn.

“It is a moral impossibility,” said old Carre of Daisybank. “How could the priest expect us to believe so wild and idle a report? In the show of hands, not one shall appear for the Eaglescairn candidate. Who can this anonymous man of straw possibly be?”

The zeal of Father Eustace in canvassing could scarcely have been exceeded by that of an Irish

priest. He denounced by name from the altar all who did not promise their votes to the anonymous candidate, who was to support the Popish interest; and he cursed the cattle, the potatoes, the families, and the relatives of all who hesitated in pledging themselves to implicit obedience.

Meetings were held among the farmers at Clanmarina, speeches made, resolutions passed, deputations arranged, addresses drawn up; and with one universal shout of applause, they received the toast given, with a look of tremendous import,—“Success to principle and Protestantism!”—by Mr. Carre, when they mustered in his farm-house, where he daily boasted of being himself an attached, honest, true-hearted, twenty-five shillings in the pound tenant of the M^cAlpines.

“A helping hand to the Protestant candidate, whoever he be,” exclaimed old Carre eagerly, “and a cold shoulder to the Papist, if he were my own son!”

The ancient custom, long since established by Sir Evan, of giving a tenants’ dinner on rent-day, was duly observed by the guardians of Sir Allan; therefore, as in former and happier times, clansmen, from every extremity of the Cairngorum estate, were seated round a hospitable board, which groaned beneath the weight of sirloins and saddles of mutton, rounds and barons of beef. The cloth was removed, and Sir Allan’s new factor, a

whimsical-looking stranger, who had the strutting air of self-consequence which seems natural to little men, advanced to say, in the most original style, that he was "unaccustomed to public speaking. He begged, however, to propose the health of the day, their absent landlord, but not," Mr. Gordon announced, "to be absent long, as the young Chief meant to celebrate his coming of age, some weeks hence, among his own people."

Loud and deafening were the acclamations with which this announcement was welcomed, and joy beamed in every honest face, as the tenantry exchanged smiles of heartfelt congratulation, in the happy prospect that bright days were again dawning for Clanmarina, and the place of Sir Evan about to be in some degree supplied to his clansmen; therefore, with cheers of grateful delight, the assembled crowd waved their tall Highland bonnets in the air, responding with their whole hearts and voices to the three times three, or nine times nine, of the factor, who now considered himself a second Demosthenes.

A pause ensued;—for Mr. Gordon, looking ambiguously round, seemed greatly at a loss how to continue his diplomatic speeches. At length, however, in another blaze of eloquence, he mentioned the probability of a coming election, and intimated his belief that their young landlord himself might probably offer himself as a candidate,

trusting much to the long-tried attachment of his clansmen and tenantry.

Again the air was rent with enthusiastic hurras, and loud above every voice in the joyful crowd was heard that of old Carre of Daisybank, exclaiming, in accents of ardent excitement, "Hurra for The M^cAlpine! hurra for the Protestant Church, and down with Popery, down with the Eaglescairn candidate!"

Every clansman stood up,—his bonnet off, his glass high in the air, his countenance glittering with enthusiasm — when Mr. Gordon, slightly stammering, now added in a deprecatory tone, but trying to assume a bold matter-of-course look, "Before I sit down, let me add, that Mr. Carre has made a slight mistake in his toast. The candidate nominated on the Eaglescairn interest is—is—Sir Allan M^cAlpine."

A silence of several minutes ensued—a very perfect silence; every countenance altered; glances of astonishment and consternation were exchanged; each man looked to his neighbour with an expression of anxious distrust, and old Carre, replacing his glass untasted on the table, and putting his hat on his head, gloomily sat down. The others followed his example; and not another drop of wine was taken, not another word was spoken, till at length, one by one, the tenants slowly rose, and after whispering aside in knots together, dispersed in mournful dismay.

“It is as we feared—as we were told!” observed Robert Carre to his father, in accents of vehement independence; “and dear as the name of M^c Alpine and the memory of Sir Evan are to us all, we have a yet dearer name and a yet higher interest to serve. The choice is a sorrowful one to make; but if Sir Allan has really become a Papist, he has become our enemy—an enemy to God and man, who must be opposed.”

“Little did I dream of living to go against Sir Evan’s family,” observed the old farmer, his voice quivering with agitation; “but if a burning stake were on the hustings for me, I would go there to uphold the faith of my fathers, the faith of Holy Scripture.”

“Yes,” replied Robert, manfully, “we must stand face to face with this trial, and overcome it, or be trampled as we should deserve under the toe of Rome.”

At this moment, Bessie M^c Ronald appeared, strolling along the road, accompanied by Father Eustace, and both in such deep conversation that they were close upon the farmer and his son before either became aware of the other’s vicinity. Bessie started, as if suffering a shock of electricity, when she first perceived her young lover; and the colour rushed in torrents to her neck and face, while she endeavoured to speak in her usual tone of careless good-humour, but her eyes could not look up, and

her voice was inaudible. Not so Father Eustace, who advanced to the old farmer with a bland air of most perfect self-possession on his dark, handsome features, saying, "We came here in hopes of meeting you." Bessie started, and looked up with an expression of surprise and perplexity, by no means diminished when the priest politely added, "I now gladly resign my charge; but our young friend here seemed afraid to pass your fierce-looking bull, therefore I volunteered my escort."

"You were not always so timid, Bessie," observed Robert Carre, with a searching look into her agitated countenance. "I am more afraid of a Popish Bull than of all the honest black cattle in our Highland meadows. Take my arm now, Bessie, and when you have taken my hand, I shall be entitled to protect you from all the dangers you do or do not fear."

Robert was surprised to see Bessie hesitate a moment, and cast a furtive glance of apprehension and doubt, before she accepted his arm, towards Father Eustace, who was following with a not-to-be-repulsed air of cordial deference, talking to Mr. Carre. The honest farmer looked as gloomy as November, and remained quite unpropitiated by all the judicious compliments of Father Eustace, who, in a tone of friendly good-fellowship, admired his favourite bullocks fattening for the cattle-show, and prophesied like a Delphic oracle that they

were sure to gain a prize. Still, the worthy agriculturist, wrapped in ill-humour and in a dreadnought great-coat, continued inaccessible, while Father Eustace, a first-rate comedian, persevered in looking most provokingly pleased, as if old Carre had given him precisely the reception he wished, and exactly such as might be expected and desired; while, with never-wearying assiduity, the persevering priest, though his efforts at conciliation were a signal failure, talked of overgrown pigs and gigantic turnips, discussed Lord Iona's pack of fox-hounds, and described many of their recent marvellous exploits, with the hair-breadth escapes by hedge and ditch, of the riders who followed them, but without any success in smoothing the ruffled feathers of Mr. Carre's temper.

On arriving at Daisybank, Father Eustace complained of such extreme fatigue, that old Carre, a perfect despot in his own home, after a short but sharp struggle between his natural hospitality and his natural horror of a Popish priest, length with surly civility, asked him to enter, and ordered up his home-made cheese and beer to refresh the weary guest. The good farmer's favourite Newfoundland dog made a strong demonstration against this Popish aggression, by various short, sharp barks, followed by a prolonged and very ominous growl, as if preparatory to a more furious onset. This his master prevented by calling him off, when

after a cautious and very suspicious inspection of the intruder, Ponto stretched out his noble limbs at Mr. Carre's feet, as if to protect him, while turning his canine eyes, flashing defiance, on Father Eustace, who looked unalterably pleased, happy, and affable, while, with an almost jovial air, he sat down to the only meal that had ever been given with a grudge at Daisybank.

It was time very soon for Bessie to return home, therefore her young lover, leaving his father to act the unwilling host to the most complaisant of guests, gladly escorted her back, and observed with delight that no sooner was Bessie beyond reach of the priest's eye, than she became nearly the same animated, happy, intelligent, and affectionate girl, who had so long continued the object of his honest and devoted attachment. They spoke now of plans for the future, with many a gay jest and joyous anticipation, while Bessie's countenance was full of arch but bashful pleasure. Every hope of Robert's future life was gilded by the prospect of being united to his first and only love, as much in principle as in feeling, as much in the prospects of a better life as in the joys of that which seemed now before them. Hours appeared like nothing to lovers so unboundedly happy, and the shades of evening were fast closing around the cottage of Bessie's mother, where Robert had stepped in for "a single moment," and stayed four hours, when

a message reached him, brought by a breathless cow-herd, that his old father had been seized during dinner with a stroke of palsy, and lay dangerously ill at Daisybank, where no one was in the house but Father Eustace and the servants.

“My father! my dear, good, excellent father! this day’s work has been too much for him!” exclaimed Robert, covering his face with his hands, in deep and solemn distress, as Bessie tearfully accompanied her afflicted lover to the garden gate. “I saw he was frightfully agitated this morning. No man dreads a Popish aggression more than he; and to meet with it in our Chief’s own family, and in our own quiet home, has been too much for his old nerves.”

Bessie had become pale as death; the words which fluttered up to her lips could not gain utterance, and again she did not look up nor speak, when her agitated lover bade her a hasty but affectionate adieu. Robert gazed at his beloved Bessie’s altered expression with astonishment, for her looks had become perfectly untranslatable and perplexing. Every vestige of her recent cheerfulness had vanished; but that of course he could not wonder at, under the shock of his own affliction; yet there seemed a sudden chill towards himself in her manner, the impression of which, as he hurried homewards, filled him with perplexity, and occupied his thoughts more than the kind-hearted

son could justify to himself, when he considered the alarming and most unexpected seizure of his much-loved father. During his whole walk with Bessie, the young lover had felt an unaccountable sensation of disappointment. Bessie had not shown all her former interest in the welfare of his favourite horses, or in his success at the ploughing match, which would always hitherto have lighted up her eyes into a blaze of eager delight, and she had decidedly avoided speaking of the coming election, though he had wished to open his whole heart to her, on the grief with which he had heard of Sir Allan, his own long-loved landlord, being about to head the Popish party. Robert let fall a few impatient exclamations on the subject while he proceeded. They fell from him thicker and faster, as the thought of Father Eustace's morning walk with Bessie forced itself on his thoughts, and his hand grasped the lock of Daisybank house, before his composure was quite restored. When Robert hurriedly arrived at home, he noiselessly opened the door, stole on tiptoe into his father's bed-room, and found old Carre only half unconscious, but looking with vague imbecile perplexity at Father Eustace, who knelt by his side, mumbling Latin prayers, in a low monotonous voice, and holding a small gilt cross to the lips of the feeble unresisting sufferer. Under ordinary circumstances Robert might have performed some wild and frantic action

to testify his indignant rage at Father Eustace's intrusion ; but, overcome by the grief of seeing his own father's idiot look, he silently sat down, and plunging his face into his hands, burst into tears of almost insupportable anguish.

Not a sound was in the room, not a whisper for several minutes, but Father Eustace having muttered a Latin benediction at the bed-side, placed his ear close to the lips of old Carre, as if listening for something the patient had replied to him, and then pretending actually to have an answer, he said aloud in a promissory tone of friendly interest, "Yes! yes! certainly! make your mind easy! I shall return to-morrow, as you desire it! Depend upon seeing me."

The maid who stood beside her master's bed seemed astonished, for she had heard nothing, and the old man looked up with a strange expression of terror and vacuity, but Father Eustace glided out of the house before Robert could speak the words that were rushing in an angry torrent to his lips ; for it appeared perfectly evident that his father was then utterly incapable of either forming a wish, or, even if he did, of expressing it.

"Remember," said Robert earnestly, almost savagely, to the attendant maid, "that man must never darken this door again! If Father Eustace calls, as he threatened, send instantly for me

whereever I am, and he shall be hurled out of this house !”

The servant gladly assented, and at these words a gleam of satisfaction appeared on the old man's face for a moment. He feebly held out his hand to Robert with a smile of affection, and pointed to the large old Bible, which stood in its usual place, but before the young man could bring it to him his face had relapsed into its former expression of vacant idiocy.

CHAPTER III.

"A knave's a knave to me in every state,
Alike my scorn if he succeed or fail,
Sporus at court, or Japhet in a jail."

POPE.

"I'll introduce you. Gentlemen! my friend."

CRABBE.

LADY EDITH being one day about to visit a family ill with typhus fever, left Beatrice at home, but as an inducement to take healthful exercise she commissioned her to visit the pleasure-grounds at Eaglescairn, where a new gardener, recently come, had proposed an occasional exchange of plants. With buoyant step, therefore, the animated young girl set forth, carrying in her hand a small specimen of the newest Camellia in a flower-pot, for which she was to receive a young Scarlet Azalea in return.

The family at Eaglescairn not being expected home for some days, Beatrice, as she scrambled over the styles and crossed the fields, felt all the excitement of a pleasant adventure in going to see what improvements had been made in the magnificent flower-beds of Eaglescairn, by the new

gardener, Mr. Macgregor, and in passing near Daisybank she called to inquire for old Mr. Carre, as well as to leave a gift from Lady Edith of some peculiarly fine foreign preserves.

Having passed Robert some miles before, evidently on his way to Bessie's cottage home, she was astonished, in a quiet lane by the river's side, to see the young girl herself walking slowly and thoughtfully beside Mrs. Lorraine, who seemed talking to her with impressive earnestness, and with a melo-dramatic air of mystery. Beatrice wished she could have recalled Robert from his useless errand to Clanmarina, or otherwise interrupted this ominous conference; but unable to devise any step she could feel justified in taking, she proceeded to Daisybank Farm. There, on opening the door, Beatrice was startled, and beyond all measure astonished, to find Father Eustace seated on the old farmer's bed-side, and talking to him in a tone of vehement excitement. The panic-struck maid was standing aghast before the fire, apparently terrified out of her very few senses, and the old man himself lay feebly gazing with a look of abject terror at the priest, who spoke to him in tones of terrible denunciation. Father Eustace held in his hand an image of St. Joseph, in stucco, and a very decayed looking piece of bone, to which he directed old Mr. Carre's almost vacant eye, and it became evident to Beatrice that he was

vehemently exhorting the apparently dying man to some act of penitence and of meritorious sacrifice.

The old dog, which was tied up to the bed-post, lay growling defiance at Father Eustace, and on a table beside the bed, Beatrice observed a large sheet of parchment, closely written over from top to bottom. Pen and ink were placed conveniently beside it, and on the floor lay a note which she quietly picked up without any one of the deeply absorbed trio becoming conscious of her presence. This was a single line addressed to Robert Carre in a feigned hand, saying that it would be of the utmost importance to Bessie's interest and happiness if he could instantly hasten to meet her at home, as she had something of consequence to tell him. This, then, had been part of a Popish plot, to get the attached son away from his father's dying-bed! Beatrice paused over it for a moment in silent indignation, and then gliding out of the house, she hurried to the farm offices. There she sent off the swiftest footed boy in the place to fetch back his young master, and immediately afterwards, accompanied by the honest ploughman, Andrew Murray, whom she called from his work, Beatrice noiselessly returned into the sick-room. Old Mr. Carre, looking completely idiotical, had a pen in his trembling hand; the paper lay before him, and he was supported in bed by the terrified maid, while Father Eustace, with an anxious crafty

expression of countenance, held his hand. Never had Beatrice seen so perfect a picture of prostration, mental and bodily, as that of the old farmer : gazing with abject fear at the priest, who looked as threatening as death, and spoke to him in accents of stern command, while the maid gazed on Father Eustace as if under the fascination of a serpent ; for no one could be within the influence of that eye and not feel it.

The heart of Beatrice seemed to stand still for a moment, and then the colour rushed into her face, flooding it with a glow of honest indignation. At this moment, she with hurried but noiseless steps glided swiftly up to the bed, and in an instant seized the pen out of Mr. Carre's hand, then snatching up the paper, which was half signed, she threw it to the stout-hearted Andrew Murray, desiring him to keep that in his custody, and never part with the document till he gave it into his young master's own hand. Beatrice, after this, sat resolutely down to await the return of Robert, determined not to leave Daisybank till she saw the old man again properly protected by his affectionate and most devoted son. The face of Father Eustace had become livid with rage at this unexpected defeat ; but the dying old man feebly held out his hand to Beatrice, and whispered with a terrified glance at the dark and working face of the priest, " Will he go away ? I die a Protestant.

Who is that? What did he make me write? Is Robert dead? Are the undertakers come?"

"All is right now," said Beatrice, in a tone of quiet kindness, which re-assured the agitated old man, though still his eye with an anxious scrutinising gaze wandered round the room; "Robert will be home soon. I shall stay here till he comes. Now try to sleep."

"Not till he goes away," replied the old man, with a shudder. "What did he give me the pen for? Is all gone? all lost? Poor Robert!"

"No! no! all is well. Keep your mind quiet, and that man shall never, as long as the world lasts, return here again. Try to forget him!"

Old Mr. Carre, with a look of devout reverence, laid his hand on the Bible, which stood by his side on the bed; then closing his languid eyes with a shudder, he remained apparently insensible, and almost fainting with weakness, as pale and immoveable as a corpse. When Robert appeared at a distance, hurrying with rapid strides towards home, Father Eustace glided noiselessly as a ghost away, and disappeared behind the offices, where soon after he was followed by Mrs. Lorraine, stealing along like a snake in the grass.

Great was the surprise of Robert to meet Bessie near his own home, when he had gone to Clanmarina in search of her, and the young girl's astonishment was not less when told of the sum-

mons which had taken him there. She felt as if dreaming with her eyes open, unable to comprehend the apparent mistake. It was a most unaccountable or a very mischievous hoax, they both agreed, but when they reached Daisybank together every other feeling of surprise or perplexity was forgotten in the storm of indignation with which Robert heard from Miss Farinelli an account of the recent Papal aggression on his father's death-bed, when, amid the old farmer's sufferings and imbecility, not a sand seemed now lingering in his hour-glass.

When the dying man and his son were left together, Robert strode up and down the room like a caged lion, in his angry excitement and perplexity respecting Father Eustace's intrusion. Great agitation exhausts the organs that express it, so that while quivering in every joint with nervous tremor after her rencontre with Father Eustace, Beatrice looked externally calm as she took leave of Robert, warning him to be watchful, or another parchment might yet be brought, and the whole affair be again more successfully manœuvred. Beatrice again started off without delay for Eaglescairn, enjoying as she thoughtfully strolled along at a random pace by the river's bank a cheering view of the passing clouds flitting athwart the sky, the daisy opening in the meadow, the rainbow throwing its arch above her head, the birds warbling on

every bough, and above all the sunshine of her own happy thoughts in having been made useful to the dying old farmer and his honest-hearted son. When Beatrice entered the magnificent gardens of Eaglescairn, which she had very seldom seen, the gorgeous beauty of the innumerable flowers filled her with delighted astonishment. Nearly an acre of azaleas displayed one brilliant sheet of white, yellow, and scarlet blossoms, and the camellias looked as if each had been modelled in wax, or cut out with scissors. Over one in particular she bent for some time with enraptured admiration, observing how each snowy leaf was edged as if with a narrow fringe of scarlet, and the whole effect of this plant seemed too beautiful even for nature herself without some special effort to produce.

“You have seen uglier flowers than that,” said a voice close to Beatrice, which made her start and look up in astonishment, while the colour flooded her whole face with crimson as she caught the observant eye of a singular-looking old man who stood opposite to her. He appeared like a living caricature more than like an ordinary man made for the every-day purposes of life, as his whole countenance and manner were so laughably grotesque. An uglier man probably no one could see twice in a life-time, for Madame De Stael might have said of him as she did of another, that

he abused the privilege men have of being ugly; yet there was something marked and peculiar in his aspect and manner which prevented Beatrice from retaining her first impression that this might be Mr. Macgregor. His dress was scarcely handsome enough to be suitable for a head gardener in so great an establishment, yet his air was so singular, and so commanding, that Beatrice felt convinced he must be "somebody." She longed to ask his name, but there was in his manner something that forbade interrogation, for it had an indescribable *soupeçon* of dignity mingled with its oddity. The stranger wore a complete suit of worsted tartan,—even his wide-awake Glengarry cap was of the same unobtrusive material, his coarse thick boots had nails in them, and he carried in his hands a stick which seemed recently cut from the hedge; yet with this plainest of all exteriors Beatrice thought her abrupt companion evidently a gentleman. He became in her estimation a very polite gentleman too, when he with a look of surly good humour took out his knife and cut her off several of the most brilliant roses and camellias, saying, with a serio-comic air of gallantry as he presented them,—“I mistook you in this garden for a butterfly enjoying the first day of its wings. Here is a rose so fresh and wild, I shall call it ‘the Beatrice Farinelli.’”

“You will make me grow partial to my own

name if I have such beautiful namesakes," replied she in a tone of good-humoured frankness, but with a very deep blush of surprise. Her smile might have supplied the place of sunshine to the flowers, when she added, "Lady Edith Tremorne sent me here with this plant for Mr. Macgregor. Can you tell me where to find him?"

"How do you know that I am not that great man the gardener myself? It would not be the first time you had made a mistake of that kind," said the eccentric old man shortly; then holding out his hand for the treasured little flower-pot he watched the face of his young companion with singular earnestness. His features expressed neither admiration nor surprise, but the most intense scrutiny, and Beatrice, confused by the very obvious examination she was undergoing, tried to seem unconscious of it by talking on with all the girlish enthusiasm she felt about the splendid flowers around, which were beyond anything she had ever even imagined; but still a mutinous blush dyed her face with scarlet. The conservatory seemed to her a perfect Crystal Palace, and when her eccentric companion, producing a key, proposed to let her see the plants, she most gladly, though with much astonishment, accepted the offer, and gazed with delighted amazement at the affluence of magnificent shrubs and flowers of every nation and climate with which it was adorned.

“Beautiful!” she exclaimed, her eyes fixed on the very bottom of a prodigious lily, while the eyes of the stranger applied the epithet to herself; “these flowers remind one of Aladdin’s garden, where the flowers were formed of gems.”

“When were you last there?” asked the old gentleman drily. “Aladdin’s flowers had one advantage over ours, that they had no thorns, and lasted for ever. Where is there anything produced in this world of which as much can be said? I have long wished to see you, Miss Farinelli, and yet now I wish, with all my heart, we had never met.”

“Why?” asked Beatrice, with very natural surprise, “what earthly object could any one have in either meeting or avoiding me?”

“Perhaps no earthly object. Perhaps one of a far higher nature than this wretched old world could offer. I am weary of the whole farce; and yet there is something for me to do before I make my bow to the hisses or applauses of a world I hate. My last tie to life is what concerns you!”

“Concerns me!” exclaimed Beatrice, colouring and looking earnestly at her strange companion with an almost convulsive start of astonishment and of unbounded anxiety: “What can you mean? There are so many things I wish to hear. Tell me, oh! tell me, if you know anything that might

bring me to the knowledge of my relations—my parents!”

“Not so fast,” replied the stranger, rapidly cutting the brightest flowers till he had formed a prodigious bouquet, “these flowers have all names of their own, but you have none. You call yourself Miss Farinelli, which is an absurd mistake. Your name is no more ‘Farinelli’ than mine is. If you deny that, I can prove it.”

“Then I shall deny it, that I may hear your proofs,” answered Beatrice, trying to smile and to recover her composure. She now glanced with deep interest at the countenance of her companion, whose voice and look betrayed a degree of agitation which he was evidently ashamed of, and anxious to conceal. At length, in a tone of emotion not to be controlled, he said with an abruptness which perfectly startled Beatrice, “Are you happy with Lady Edith? Tell me honestly now, are you happy in that sallow, dull, Presbyterian-looking hum-drummery of hers, or should you like an entire change for the better? Every dog, the adage says, has its day—has it—has had it—or will have it. This may perhaps be yours!”

He looked keenly at Beatrice, but apparently felt so confident of his right to question her, that the young girl seemed as much bound to tell the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as if she had been on oath before a magistrate; therefore,

though frightened to death by his abrupt and almost haughty manner, she resolutely replied, "I should be most ungrateful to the kindest of friends, to the most generous benefactress in the world, and to a good Providence who overloads me with benefits, if I were not as happy and satisfied as I can ever be without finding out who I am and where I come from. Can you, will you, tell me all you know?"

"Am I to believe, then," said the stranger, extending a sprig of myrtle to Beatrice on the end of his garden-scissors, "that you are contented to remain dependent upon one who can ill afford such a charge,—whose whole income might be put into a homœopathic pill?"

"My dependence on Lady Edith has never been more painful to me than that of an only child on her mother," replied Beatrice earnestly, while a bright tear of grateful affection glittered in her eye. Her voice became low and tremulous, when she added, "While I continue to live, breathe, or feel, I must gratefully love that best of friends. But for her I should have lived a homeless beggar. Think, then, what I owe to Lady Edith."

"She of course taught you all that sentimental nonsense!" said the stranger, affecting a careless tone, but darting a sharp piercing glance at Beatrice from under his dark commanding eye-brows; "Lady Edith, whatever she has omitted to teach

you, has at least taught you gratitude on the very largest scale."

"You mistake Lady Edith entirely!" exclaimed Beatrice in a tone of mingled astonishment and regret. "She is much too high-minded and generous to speak of my obligations; but when Bishop Herbert confirmed me, he related what Mr. Clinton had often told me before, the story of my not very long life. They alone explained how much I owe to the best and truest friend that any helpless orphan ever found."

"Who says you are an orphan? Who can say that you have not a mother shedding tears of solitary grief because her child is a heretic?" exclaimed the stranger in a tone of stern excitement, but intently watching the effect of his words on Beatrice, who stood lividly pale, her lips apart, her nostrils dilated, her eyes flashing with eagerness. "What would you give to hear more?"

"I would give up anything but principle; anything but my duty to God and to Lady Edith," answered Beatrice in accents of deep emotion; for she felt that much more than life was at stake now, and the conversation with this hard-souled stranger reminded her of much that had formerly passed with Mrs. Lorraine. "Tell me all you know; or at least tell me something."

"Not while you are a Protestant! Not while you remain under the roof of Lady Edith Tremorne,"

replied her companion, opening the garden-gate, which they now reached, for Beatrice to retire, and putting into her trembling hands the magnificent bouquet he had cut, which could scarcely have been equalled in Covent Garden Market. He then added, in a tone of mingled kindness and authority, "Let me see you here again; at three, to-morrow, I shall be in this garden punctually; but bring no one with you, and tell no one with whom you are about to meet."

"I cannot tell any one who you are, as I do not know," replied Beatrice anxiously, and yet trying to smile. "Have you any particular name?"

"One that I have, perhaps, no better right to bear than you have to yours," muttered the stranger, with a degree of stern and sudden agitation that made Beatrice ask herself, in some alarm, if he were perfectly sane; but the incognito looked like a gentleman in his senses too; therefore, though greatly intimidated by the stranger's beetling eyebrows and gruff abrupt manner, she added in a rather frightened voice, "Now, pray tell me who it really is that I have had the pleasure of meeting; I am dying to know?"

"Then you must die," replied the old gentleman resolutely; "I have not made up my mind yet, after meeting you so unexpectedly, what to say, and what to leave unsaid. Little do you guess how

much depends on the decision! That secret has been the torture of my existence for years."

"Then, why not tell it now?" asked Beatrice, anxiously. "Think what I must suffer till you do."

"No!—a thousand times no!—I shall have a muzzle on, while you remain an obstinate little heretic. Do you think such secrets as these are to jump out at once, like a jack-in-the-box to amuse children? No! This is no child's play," said the stranger, becoming very serious. "No! It cannot be told yet; not, perhaps, while I survive. I must consult Father Eustace, and you must listen to what he will say as if he spoke in the name of all your unknown relations. Come back to-morrow at the same hour, or I shall put the cat into the bag again."

"May I bring Lady Edith?" inquired Beatrice. "And are you quite sure Lord Eaglescairn will not be returned?"

"I am sure of nothing, except that you must come without Lady Edith. Let me see none of that school-girl mannerism, but do as I bid you! What objection have you to meet Lord Eaglescairn if he does arrive?"

"We never intrude here when the family is at home," replied Beatrice, with an amused and puzzled smile. "But I could have no more rational objection to meet Lord Eaglescairn than you to meet Lady Edith. You do not even know her!"

“Do I not!” muttered the stranger between his teeth, before he strode hastily away. “Your paragon too-good-for-this-world friend was known to me once for all; ages before you were born. I hated her then and ever since. Well! who knows what may happen next! Take patience and shuffle the cards! There are worse people in the world after all than even Lady Edith.”

“I think so,” said Beatrice, brightly smiling. “The only doubt is, if there be any better.”

“I only wish Lady Edith would never interfere with what she considers doing good, teaching the poor to read and write, which only makes them think. Tell Lady Edith, who is too much of the busy-body Lady Bountiful for me, that I mean to settle a pension of ten thousand a-year on all those who will mind their own business. As Dogberry says, ‘let reading and writing come by nature.’”

“You must be a very unpleasable person, not to be pleased with the schools at Clanmarina!” replied Beatrice, smiling as the strange stranger turned away, wrapped up in his own dignity and in his border plaid. “It is as natural for Lady Edith to do kind actions, as for a ball thrown up in the air to come down again. And now you have promised to tell me all I ask to-morrow,” added Beatrice in her most fascinating manner—

“At least, I suppose you will promise?”

“Then you must put up with a good round

negative ; the less people expect in this odd world the less they are disappointed," answered he vaguely. " I thought my heart was in an armour of steel, but the sight of you has inade me more miserable than before. I once fancied it impossible to be worse.

" ' Weary of all
I meet, or feel, or hear, or see.' "

Beatrice had never before heard the name of Lady Edith mentioned without the most reverential respect ; therefore, she listened with indignant astonishment to the angry sarcastic tone in which this oddly-mannered stranger spoke of her beloved benefactress, and it was in great perplexity that she debated with herself whether ever voluntarily to meet him again.

A sharp struggle was going on in her mind, between curiosity to know whether he could or would tell her anything of her own origin, and very deep indignation at his tone in mentioning Lady Edith, when, on turning a corner of the lane, Beatrice met a personage exactly answering to the description she had heard of Mr. Macgregor. He paused as she was about to pass, and fixing his eyes with angry astonishment and very evident disapprobation on her splendid bouquet, said in a tone of surly amazement, " Who, in the wide world, has dared to cut my prize camellias ? These flowers are all from my garden. Several of these were intended for the flower-show ! Pray, Miss, how on

earth came they here ? Am I awake, or dreaming ? Who gave them to you, Miss Farinelli ? ”

“ I wish you could tell me, for the gentleman would not give his name,” replied Beatrice, immediately describing her recent companion in the garden ; and while she proceeded, Mr. Macgregor’s whole countenance changed to an expression of the most profound respect, as he said in an accent of surprise, “ That must have been my lord himself ! I thought, all along, his lordship would come home in time to observe his own Saint’s-day to-morrow. If you wish to see flowers in perfection, Miss, come and see our Chapel decorated for Sunday. I have been placing there what would gain the first prize in any flower-show throughout the world. Your eyes will probably never see such a sight again. It is worth an old man’s while to be gardener at Eaglescairn, where my flowers are put to so good a purpose. None of your ball-room bouquets here ! ”

Beatrice felt perfectly blameless on the score of ball-room bouquets, but smilingly passed on, carrying her own splendid present ; and, when she reached home, related to Lady Edith, with girlish frankness and animation, the greater part of what had passed during her particularly adventurous walk. The only passage suppressed was what she felt might be painful to her benefactress—the comments made on Lady Edith’s own circumstances, and singular generosity to herself, a subject respecting which Beatrice felt deeply, but spoke

little, knowing that her feelings were all fully understood and most fully appreciated by the most generous heart in the world.

“Your account of Lord Eaglescairn’s conversation only confirms what I heard yesterday,” said Lady Edith, thoughtfully, “that he, and his whole family, have become frantically eager of late about making converts. Father Eustace asserts, that for every Protestant brought round to Romanism, the successful Papist is saved an hundred years of purgatory; therefore now, upon a principle of the merest selfishness, it becomes of tremendous importance to carry over one individual. The manoeuvres employed at present are very strange; but as for any attempt of the kind on you, my dear girl, I trust the fortress is impregnably garrisoned by a long course of Bible-reading and prayer,—as well as by the consciousness that you are an immortal being, with immortal interests, not to be hazarded on the word of man, but on the written word of God.”

“Yes! thanks to my best of friends, Lady Edith,” replied Beatrice, in a tone of solemn emotion. “I used to think there was a wide gulf between us and all idolators, but now even among my own few friends, how many, of late, have been ensnared into the ranks of idol worshippers. It is a mystery that I could wonder at for ever, when an educated Protestant returns to the very infancy of Pagan religion, by adoring images, and

even instruments of torture. Who would think of reverencing the knife with which his leg had been amputated? Yet the stone that killed Stephen, or a part of St. Peter's cross, are objects of actual worship to the Papists."

"The infection of Mariolatry once taken, there seems no remedy for, and no limit to, its delusions," observed Lady Edith. "But there is no cure for Romanism like going to Rome; and as you, Beatrice, have hitherto seen or heard little of its superstitious rites, let us venture to-morrow, as you are specially invited, to see the Popish chapel, before the service begins. Lord Eaglescairn has spared neither pains nor expense to show off Popery there in its most splendid deformity; therefore, you may now see all that tinsel and velvet, painting, gilding, vestments, perfumes, stained glass, and music can do to render a church like a theatre."

"How different," answered Beatrice, her bright, intellectual eye irradiated with animation, "from the dignified purity of a spiritual worship, such as we are accustomed to at St. Mark's chapel, which needs no visible object of adoration. We pity the Egyptians for worshipping bulls, cats, and leeks, and the South Sea Islanders for adoring pigs; but prayers to a wooden image are equally incomprehensible!"

"When I went to the cathedral at Antwerp," said Lady Edith, "I saw some strange specimens of Popish puerility and foppery. On a stone pillar

was hung a diamond necklace, the gift of some devotee, and high above that was suspended a bass violin by Staduarius, worth £200. Advancing onwards, I reached an image of the Virgin Mary,—a large wax doll, dressed in a tawdry old court dress, the petticoat, of faded blue satin, being covered with a spangled skirt, such as you would see in front of any booth at a fair. A crown of gilt paper, and a wreath of faded artificial flowers, completed this lifeless idol. How truly is Romanism said to be masked heathenism; and it might really be disputed whether Mahomet, Joe Smith, or the Pope, is the greatest impostor."

Beatrice felt an intense interest when, for the first time, she saw a Popish chapel. The dim religious light, struggling through many a stained-glass window,—the incessant tinkling of little bells,—the dressing and undressing of the priests,—the shrine in a side aisle, containing, in a richly-sculptured sarcophagus, a splendidly dressed wax image of St. Veronica,—the holy water, with which the people imitated baptism by sprinkling themselves,—the tall candles, wasting their unavailing light while eclipsed by sunshine,—the dark box for secret confession,—and the smoking incense, which seemed to Beatrice as if it had some intoxicating, mystical effect upon those who breathed it, all bore a marvellous resemblance to what she had recently read of the Buddhist superstitions. A palm-branch, plaited by the nuns, blessed by the

Pope, and brought home by Lord Eaglescairn from the Sixtine chapel, was borne round several times for reverential contemplation, though it seemed to Beatrice merely made of old shavings. The embroidered purse of scarlet velvet, handed about to receive donations, was very magnificent; and Beatrice felt that the whole was a solemn pantomime, in which all the mental faculties were suspended, instead of being exercised,—a well-got-up melodramatic representation, dazzling to the eyes, but most prostrating to the intellect. Such finely adorned, busy, and fussy ceremonies appeared to Beatrice no better than the flowers and fruit brought to Cleopatra, which concealed a deadly asp lurking underneath.

Father Eustace, in his sermon, which began and ended with an invocation to the Virgin Mary, as Queen of Heaven, related, on the authority of a living cardinal, how one of the saints canonized in 1839, when he knelt down in an attitude of prayer to the Virgin, was seen by all present to be elevated more than a foot from the ground; how St. John Joseph, canonized at the same time, “had a halo of light encircling his head during prayer,” “and how his frequent ravishment from the earth and suspension in the air was a well-known occurrence; and also that many saw St. Pacificus raised several inches above the surface of the altar steps.”* Beatrice thought this a most useless and uncomfortable

* Wiseman's Lives, pp. 150, 186.

mark of preeminence, and believed his faculties were probably suspended rather than his body; for it was clearly a case of *tête monté*. Lady Edith, shocked at all the dangerous fallacies and blasphemies she heard, glanced around, and saw Mrs. Lorraine listening, her whole countenance wrapt in almost delirious excitement; and beside her, to the surprise and consternation of Beatrice, sat Bessie M^cRonald, her bright eyes brighter than ever, and her whole face in a glow of the most intense admiration.

Scarcely had Beatrice left the chapel before she was overtaken by the young sportsman who had, on a previous day, accompanied her from church; and, while Lady Edith was detained behind by an old woman, relating an endless history of her rheumatism, the stranger, advancing with fascinating grace, joined Beatrice, who gave a half-glance round of astonishment, and the colour stole into her cheek when she unexpectedly found that he intended to escort her along the road, saying, in a tone of easy *nonchalance*, "Here I am, returned on your hands like a very bad shilling! As I attended your church last week, now you have returned the visit to mine."

Beatrice raised her eye furtively for a moment, but dropped it again instantly without speaking, and walked rapidly on.

"Did you ever hear of two lovers who held opposite persuasions, and would not marry till

they were of one mind?" asked her companion, amused at the notes of astonishment he saw multiplying in the expressive face of Beatrice. "They both argued so well, that they both became converted, and so remained as much apart in doctrine as ever. Suppose we try the same experiment. But I see you are going to speak! I yield to your irresistible arguments without having heard them. I admire all you are going to say, and quite agree with you already."

Beatrice looked up for half a second, her face perfectly scarlet with astonishment at the oddity of her companion's manner; but the stranger looked quite unconscious that he had said anything at all unusual, and rattled heedlessly on, saying, "Pray, Miss Farinelli, why did you throw your bouquet at my head just now?"

"I did?" exclaimed Beatrice, in utter amazement. "I have no bouquet to throw!"

"Well! do not seem so scandalized! I merely wanted to see you look astonished, and to find a pretext to offer you this. How generous I am! The camellias are perfect, and the perfume of this gardenia delicious. Now, thank me instantly; for I never allow myself to be treated with ingratitude."

"You are quite right, but rather peremptory," replied Beatrice, smiling, "I have very seldom had such flowers, and very seldom felt more obliged."

"Now, you are evidently wishing me an hundred miles off! I ought not to have ventured on

approaching you; but the temptation was irresistible when I saw you, like a wandering Peri, strolling on the high-road alone, with no companion but that small parasol. I positively shall not be driven away from you, even by the most forbidding words or looks. There is a most appropriate old song, that must have been written a century since on purpose for you—

“‘Pray, Goody, please to moderate the rancour of your tongue!

Why flash those sparks of fury from your eyes?

Ply me, try me,—prove me e’er you deny me,

If you cast me off you blast me never more to rise.’

Say, then, that I may remain,—that I may see you safely home,—that you consider Mr. Cornelius O’Brien, as I announced myself, at least an endurable nuisance.”

“I seem not likely to be allowed any choice;” replied Beatrice, unable to help laughing, “you are the most arbitrary acquaintance I ever had,—except, perhaps, Lord Eaglescairn, whom I met for the first time yesterday! How very odd he is!”

“Everybody is odd! My own private opinion is, that no one can be considered quite sane. I am not; you are not; none of our relations are. Lord Eaglescairn is my very eccentric and very near relative, but nevertheless not so tiresome as the Duke of Dorchester,” said the incognito with a fastidious smile, and a look most charmingly confidential. “He even has the depravity of taste to tell

me the very oldest Joe Millers, pinches my elbow to make me laugh at the joke; and if I do not laugh, he actually explains it! a dreadful bore. The Duke thinks more of his own wit than Sheridan did of his. Lord Eaglescairn is very vehement though, in his loves and in his hatreds; time and the gout have rusted his temper, so you are lucky to be on the right side of his good graces now."

"Are you sure that I am?" said Beatrice,—jestingly assuming a tone of dignified uncertainty. "His manner to me was very abrupt and very strange. I am told his son, Lord Iona, is, if possible, still more eccentric!"

"Only too true! Now let us suppose that Lord Eaglescairn hates you if he seemed to do so, and that I take the opposite part, in rather liking you than otherwise. The fact is, I always like or hate in extremes; but you must not mistake me for a mere scatter-brained rattle, or look puzzled at me, as if I were a conundrum that you are going to give up. I mean soon to be quite reformed into dulness."

"I hope not;" said Beatrice laughing, "I like people with some vein of oddity in them."

"You will think I am now making you my father confessor; but the fact is, that since I have seen you, and known Lady Edith, I find out that there has long been a sort of good-for-nothingness about my life that wearies me. I have seen the world on both sides now, and tired of it. Ever since we met last,

I have been in a state of clairvoyance, which tells me that I shall turn over a new leaf soon, read improving books, think deeply, talk sense, cultivate intelligent society, and be, through your means, supremely happy or supremely miserable for life hereafter."

"You would not easily be made miserable; I imagine that would be much too difficult a task for any one to try," replied Beatrice, irresistibly laughing at the comic seriousness of his manner and words; "but poetical happiness or misery are in general very easily created."

"Ah! you are mistaking the vivacity of a heavy heart for light-headed indifference. You misunderstand me entirely, and it hurts my feelings," said the lively stranger, assuming a look of modest embarrassment. "I have thought, dreamed, and talked of no one but you, since first we met, but you see how diffident I am, and ought not to put me out of countenance by such a look of incredulity. We Irish O'Briens cannot endure to be discouraged and undervalued!"

"A very uncommon failing!" replied Beatrice smiling; "you seem rehearsing speeches in the country now, against a London campaign, but you are as much thrown away here, as Kean would be in a barn. What immortal honour you might gain on the boards of some private theatre! That last attitude would bring down a whirlwind of applause."

“ You think me affected ? perhaps, too, you suspect me of being insincere. What an aspersion ! Such a cruel misrepresentation from you might really make one seek an honourable grave,” replied Beatrice’s companion, pathetically clasping his primrose gloves together ; “ then you would at least drop a tear upon my memory.”

“ Yes ! and blot you out for ever,” said Beatrice, her bright eyes flashing good-humoured defiance. “ What very romantic novels there must be in your circulating library ! ”

“ Very ; I am sometimes quite dangerously sentimental myself. The last I read was ‘ Misplaced Affections.’ The Matildas and Adelines were all smiles, tears, and hysterics : they never walked quietly into a room ; but came in according to circulating-library-etiquette, bounding, gliding, or springing ; and they knew all the British poets by heart. One heroine, reared in an Irish cabin, writes enchanting poetry, plays at first sight on the piano, sings superlatively, and turns out at last to have been a Duchess in her own right instead of the nameless foundling she was supposed. How very awkward it would be, not to know whether one’s honoured parents had been in the peerage or in the workhouse.”

Beatrice started, coloured painfully, and became silent, in a state of very obvious embarrassment, almost painful to behold. Her companion looked with astonishment now at the varying colour on

her cheek, which went and came like waves of the sea, while her whole expression had changed from the sparkling vivacity of sunshine to the gravest melancholy. "Have I said anything to distress you?" asked the stranger, in a tone of very deep regret. "It would grieve me beyond expression to have annoyed you. Since we first met, and that seems to my impatience ages ago, I have been wishing constantly to meet you, to look on the same objects as you do, to breathe the same atmosphere, to speak on the same subjects, to hear the same sounds, and to think the same thoughts; but now I cannot comprehend what has agitated you thus. Tell me if I am to blame,—tell me if I have offended you. Let me not go away in wretched ignorance of my fault. Pray do let us both for a moment be serious, and tell me the worst."

"I am always serious," said Beatrice, endeavouring to speak cheerfully, "but you and I are both anonymous to each other, and you are evidently not aware who I am. In a tone and with a look never to be forgotten, she added, "I can regret nothing that placed me under the generous kindness of Lady Edith Tremone; but without birth, connexions or fortune, I am a mere castaway, rescued from the ocean."

"Beatrice Farinelli!" exclaimed the stranger in accents of unbounded interest. "How often have I heard that name pronounced in tones of the most devoted attachment by Sir Allan M^cAlpine, when he

formerly admitted me to the very inner chamber of his confidence ! Who then believed, or could have imagined, that he should ever have been taught such treason against human nature as to give up his home, his attachment, his friends, and his country, for the heavy monotony and heartless loneliness of a dungeon in La Trappe, as rumour says he intends. Look at this beautiful landscape, that noble residence, those smiling farms, and that thriving little village !—all to be forsaken,—all rejected by him on whom God in his bounty bestowed them, for a lazy cell, a scourge, and a cowl.”

“ I trust not ; as Sir Allan is announced to be a candidate for parliament,” replied Beatrice anxiously. “ He is like a brother to me, and as a son to Lady Edith, therefore we hope yet to have him restored to his natural ties, to his old friendships, and to his actual duties, by this political movement.”

“ It is all a mere *ruse* to blind the tenantry, and to mislead himself,” muttered the stranger in an undertone. “ McAlpine is too honest and truthful for their purposes, and can never be trusted by his masters to enter political life. No ! his doom is sealed ; his intellects can be as much as possible degraded by fairy tales and visions, which is the popish plan with newly-caught victims who are not fit for their deeper schemes, and he will be ensnared into becoming a voluntary victim, shut up in La Trappe ;—a trap in every sense !”

“ Dreadful ! ” exclaimed Beatrice, growing pale with apprehension. “ Can nothing be done to rescue him ? ”

“ Nothing, when you consider the safe custody that M^cAlpine is in with his fathomless uncle, Father Ambrose. If any scheme could be devised, you are sure of my aid. You may draw a bill at sight upon my exertions, to any amount, and whenever you wish to illustrate the theory of attraction only summon me to your presence. One only hope remains. Sir Allan had an attachment in life I know, which equalled in depth and fervour, he once assured me, the most fabulous imaginations of any poet. And can I wonder at that feeling now ? Were he to meet, again, that one individual so deserving of his affection, and to realize all the hopes he confided to me in his happier days, could there be a doubt that Sir Allan would be restored to himself ? Miss Farinelli, you must rescue him, for you only could succeed ! ”

“ Impossible ! you quite misunderstand the brother-and-sister terms we are on : no more I assure you,” replied Beatrice, becoming pale as death. “ Think of me, as I trust Allan has learned to do, and as I do myself, only as a nameless foundling.”

“ But in all else inexpressibly the superior of others. I know that the name of M^cAlpine is as old as any in Domesday Book, but what then ? If you were a peeress in your own right, as I dare

say you are, that could not make Sir Allan more devoted than he was. With the allurements of such a home as he once promised himself, my poor deluded friend might be recalled. He may yet become the envy of mankind,—mine more than all ! But it matters not ! That shall not interfere——”

The stranger paused, hesitated, and abruptly bowing to Beatrice, hurried away ; but Lady Edith met him afterwards on the road, talking to this man, nodding to that, and laughing or chatting with all, the very picture of good-humoured hilarity and of general urbanity, as pleasant and sociable as if he had been candidate in a contested election.

Beatrice proceeded homewards that day, pondering and re-pondering all that had been said by the rattling, yet clever and interesting stranger during this memorable walk ; and she convinced herself that he was as pleasant as any one could be on a short acquaintance of only some hours. Her mind became filled with amusing reveries, in which he took a very prominent part, and she felt that her interest in him was of a very different nature from her preference for Allan, which had seemed from childhood a part of herself, now calmed down into a rational and reasonable friendship, tempered by a growing suspicion that he was in every hope for time or eternity a transformed being. Beatrice was not one to alter her feelings, like her dresses, in a day ; yet could Allan, never writing one line to his old friends, be himself entirely unchanged ?

Often had the young mind of Beatrice built gorgeous fabrics of coming prosperity to attend on Sir Allan, when glory and honour were to be lavished upon the young Chief of M^cAlpine; and as the task of making her former companion happy had never been to her or Lady Edith a difficult one, she had sanguinely hoped to witness his future felicity, though she dared not think of sharing it; but now all these bright hopes on his account had vanished, giving place to the most gloomy apprehensions. A vision forced itself upon her thoughts, of Allan, always from a boy apt to be in extremes, especially when he could sacrifice himself for others, buried alive, probably, in the dark cold cell of a monastery, while others were occupying that property and fortune which the Divine Being had awarded to him as his birthright.

“Yes!” thought Beatrice, mournfully endeavouring, though in vain, to occupy her thoughts with the everyday occupations of life; “if Allan has indeed fallen under strong delusion to believe a lie,—if he is indeed following cunningly devised fables, we are not only divided for this world but for ever. Allan! so long my only companion, whose remembrance is entwined with every fibre of my memory, you cannot be up-rooted from my thoughts. My friendship for you, Allan, can only be extinguished when memory itself shall perish, but our sympathy exists no more.”

CHAPTER IV.

“Is there in human form, that bears a heart,
A wretch ! a villain ! lost to love and truth !
That can with studied, sly ensnaring art,
Betray sweet Bessy’s unsuspecting youth ?
Shame on his perjured arts ! dissembling smooth !
Are honour, virtue, conscience, all exiled ?
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth ?” — BURNS.

LADY EDITH sat one morning early, reading, as was her usual custom at that hour, the Bible and some other works of intellectual devotion. Bright scarlet roses were rushing in at every window of her drawing-room, perfuming the gentle summer gale which refreshed without disturbing her, while the song of many birds in joyous concert resounded gladly among the surrounding trees.

Lady Edith, who delighted to observe how much good prevails over evil, even in this world, looked cheerfully up, to admire and enjoy so many beautiful gifts of Providence, when she became startled to perceive M^cRonald, who had entered the room unobserved, standing before her as pale as a sheet, his lips quivering, and vainly attempting to speak.

“ M^cRonald ! ” exclaimed Lady Edith, half rising from her seat, in sudden consternation, while Beatrice hastily left her drawing and came forward

with anxious alarm. "Tell me the worst at once, M^cRonald! What has happened?"

"If you please, my lady," said he, in accents that seemed to tremble with anger and grief, "that foolish, well-meaning idiot Bessie is below, and poor Robert Carre. This is a very different visit from their last." The old man, after a solemn and most sorrowful pause, during which a large tear rolled slowly down his time-worn countenance, mournfully added in a tone of smothered despair, "Two more heart-broken young people I never saw. It is all Mrs. Lorraine's doing; but if any comfort can be found, they have come to the right place now when they come to your ladyship. Father Eustace has it all his own way now, but I wish the world and Clanmarina were filled with better people."

Lady Edith gazed at M^cRonald's agitated countenance with grave alarm, which became increased rather than diminished when at her desire he ushered in her two young favourites. It seemed but a day since they had appeared the happiest betrothed pair whom she had ever congratulated on their joyful prospects of spending life together in cheerful industry, integrity, and devotion; but now the wind seemed to have swept over all those honest hopes, those pleasant anticipations, and they were gone.

Robert and Bessie entered not now, as before, arm in arm, both smiling with shy but conscious

felicity. To-day, on the contrary, young Carre, his cheek pale, his lip compressed, and his eyes flashing with indignation and sorrow, strode first into the room. With a bow of the deepest, but most mournful respect to Lady Edith, he then firmly grasped the back of a chair and glanced almost fiercely round at Bessie, who followed faltering in her step, and as if crouching into nothing with misery. She looked beautiful beyond expression, but it seemed only the beauty of death; for the joyous light that used to dance in her splendid eyes was quenched, the colour that once bloomed in her brilliant cheek was fled, and the whole of her figure, expression and attitude, seemed like that of one doomed to martyrdom. Joan of Arc herself could not have looked more rapt in dismal enthusiasm at the hour of death than Bessie McRonald did now, while she stood with an expression of rigid fixedness in mind as well as in body before Lady Edith."

"Robert Carre!" exclaimed Lady Edith, in a low tone of sorrowful amazement and very anxious suspense; "how is this? What has happened between you? Tell me all!"

"None can explain anything but herself," replied Robert, turning slowly round with a look of stern manly grief, but avoiding even a momentary glance at Bessie, who had covered her face with her hands, and shook as in the coldest blast of winter. "None know the truth except

her, and it is to find out the whole truth that I have brought my ——. No! not my Bessie,—no longer mine! But I wish at least to have all explained. Tell me, Bessie! what has turned your mind upside down? only tell me the real reason why we are parted—tell me why my faithful affection—my devoted love for many long years, is to be crushed; why every hope of home and happiness—oh Bessie! Is it you that could say this! you that could think of such a thing! All, all is ended for ever!”

Young Carre, regardless now of Lady Edith's presence, and of all but his own overwhelming grief, sunk on the chair, covered his face with his hands in all the agony of a strong man overwhelmed with sudden calamity, and groaned aloud in a passionate agony of sorrow. Long and vehemently he struggled to master his emotion, till at length he started up evidently ashamed of it, as well as angry at himself, saying in accents broken to fragments with agitation, “Ask her, Madam! ask Bessie to tell all! anything but this dreary silence. Have I offended her? Does she no longer love me? Am I supplanted? Can she ever find another who has loved her from infancy as I have done and still do? Through every moment of conscious existence I have loved her, and believed that in time and eternity we should be one.”

There was a pause of several minutes, during which a deep convulsive sob from Bessie was the

only sound to be heard, while her pale lips became compressed and her small hands were firmly clenched together. The benevolent eye of Lady Edith was fixed with a look of penetrating sorrow upon the unhappy girl, who still kept her trembling hands riveted over her convulsed and pallid face.

“Here, Madam,” continued Robert, in a low tone of forced composure; “here is the letter I received from Bessie some hours ago. It has filled me with a most withering amazement, and I never rested till I had tracked her steps to this house,—to her uncle’s room.”

He opened up a letter in such indignant haste as to tear it almost in two. With a shaking hand he then almost dashed it down on the table before Lady Edith, and walked hastily up and down the room with rapid strides, till she had read it attentively through. Bessie, meanwhile, with her trembling hands clasped together, and the countenance of a corpse, sat immoveably cowering on a chair which lady Edith had at first pointed out to her. Not an eye-lid stirred, but a deep gasp of agitation was all the sign of life she gave.

Lady Edith deliberately examined the letter, sealed, she could not but observe, with a Latin motto and a crest borne by the Ambrose family—the globe surmounted by a tiara, with which Father Eustace had formerly sealed his notes to Sir Evan.

Twice Lady Edith read over this letter, and each time she felt an increasingly sorrowful perplexity what to think and what to do. She then looked round with mournful regret at the scene of devastating misery before her, and sighed heavily over the sudden change. Following, as usual, the strong impulse of her own kind heart and clear understanding, Lady Edith then drew her chair close beside Bessie, and taking her by the hand, said in accents of heartfelt kindness, but at the same time of most earnest remonstrance, "Surely, Bessie, it must require some stronger reason than I can imagine, to make you give up the happy prospect of becoming Robert Carre's much-loved wife! What can have changed you so sadly since that joyous day when I hoped that you had, with the blessing of God, attained the certainty of a well-ordered home in which to pass many well-spent years together? Why do you now break the heart of your faithful and attached Robert? Do you prefer another?"

"No! no! impossible! I never mean to marry — never — never!" exclaimed Bessie, her voice rising to a tone of high enthusiasm, and a deep stain of scarlet mounting to her hitherto pallid cheek, "Robert will one day find another wife. For me there shall never be any husband on earth! never!"

"Bessie," said Lady Edith, looking with earnest

sadness at the agitated girl, "it is early in life to know your own mind so unalterably. In a few years you may probably change this resolution, and then ——."

"Never!" replied Bessie, with mournful firmness, "I shall soon be placed beyond the reach of change, and I ought not to regret the sacrifice as I do."

"You are not dying, Bessie, and nothing short of death can place a young creature like you so certainly beyond the reach of a thousand vicissitudes in the hopes and fears, the wishes and intentions of life."

"I am bound for the present by a solemn oath to reveal nothing," replied Bessie, in a tone far different from its naturally melodious cheerfulness, "time will tell all! Robert need only look in my miserable, altered face, to see what it cost me to give him up. Friends, who must for the present be nameless, have told me what I owe to duty; but it is well that the blue sky overhead, and the sun shining brightly above, remind me now, in this hour of temptation and trial, that there is a world for which all on earth must be sacrificed—must be crushed like a worm beneath my feet."

"Bessie's voice had sunk away to the lowest whisper, while Robert listened as if life or death depended on every syllable she uttered. He now advanced towards Lady Edith, the expression of his features almost fierce with agitation, and said

in a tone stern with anxiety, "Ask Bessie, Madam, who that man is with whom she has lately been observed walking near Eaglescairn, almost before daylight in the morning, and after dusk in the evening. From whom has Bessie received of late the rarest flowers, grown in an expensive conservatory, such as poor people, in our rank, cannot afford even to look at? — Ask her, madam, also where she got these."

Robert hurled upon the table, while his pale compressed lip quivered with angry contempt, a rosary of amber beads, a relic of decayed bone in a small glass case which broke as it fell, an image of St. Bridget in stucco, an old tooth fit only for a charnel-house, some ancient iron instrument of torture, a lock of odd-looking red hair, said to be St. Bridget's, and a missal richly decorated with brass corners and clasps. He turned then to Bessie, and said in accents dignified by the intensity of feeling with which he spoke, "Your mother sent me these. Is it for trash like this, Bessie, that you give up the honest affection of a heart that would die for you? Tell me what villain has betrayed you into such worse than folly. If I could be certain — if I could only discover that Lord Eaglescairn himself is the enemy who has misled your mind, he should feel what man is to man, where the feelings are by nature alike. Bessie, end my suspense! Do you prefer another? Nothing short of that assur-

ance can make me abandon all hope. Whom do you prefer?"

Bessie rose from her seat. With a trembling tearful glance she held out her hand towards Robert, and falteringly advanced a few steps towards him. He rushed forward to meet her, and she fell fainting into his extended arms, while he showered upon her a thousand epithets of the tenderest attachment. When Lady Edith observed the depth and ardour of affection with which young Carre watched the gradual restoration of Bessie's consciousness, and the honest rapture with which he welcomed her restoration, she thought how beautiful are the best affections of human life, how merciful is the Creator who grants His blessing upon them, and how cruel that religion which would extinguish the most pleasing earthly gift of God to man. To Robert's memory these lines of his favourite Burns soon after occurred as a pleasing expression of his own feelings, which had always been full of nature's best poetry :

“Not the bee upon the blossom,
In the pride o' sunny noon ;
Not the little sporting fairy
All beneath the simmer moon ;
Not the poet, in the moment
Fancy lightens in his 'ee,
Kens the pleasure, feels the rapture
That thy presence gives to me.”

CHAPTER V.

"Such thoughts as love the gloom of night,
I close examine by the light ;
For who, though bribed by gain to lie,
Dare sunbeam-written truths deny ?"—GREENE.

THE next news that Lady Edith and Beatrice heard of Bessie filled them with indignant and almost incredulous astonishment. She had disappointed her young lover, and gone to serve Lady Eaglescairn at the Castle, there to be taught under an Abigail to act as the future assistant in the toilet and boudoir, at a very considerable salary. Robert, who felt that the greatest of all griefs is to cashier from our affections one who had hitherto appeared deserving of their utmost depth, with feelings of outraged affection angrily and sadly contemplated Bessie's farewell letter to him as if he almost hoped the words might vanish altogether. From that day he sorrowfully shut himself up in a nut-shell at home, refusing to see any one, while paying constant unremitting but most sorrowful attention to his dying father.

On young Carre's return home from the last

interview at Lady Edith's with Bessie he saw a man leave his father's house, and after obviously making a circuit to avoid meeting him he disappeared like a phantom among the offices. Robert hurried forward to overtake the fugitive, but failed; and though he asked the maid usually in attendance, who had left the house at his approach, she maintained that no mortal had been at Daisybank during his absence. There was nevertheless a hurry and confusion in the servant's manner of speaking, and a look of craven fear that perplexed young Carre, who then approached the bedside of his dying father. The old farmer, when Robert appeared, struggled up from his pillow and sat erect, an effort which he had been unable before to make. He threw a rapid but almost vacant glance round the room, and spoke, though so inarticulately from extreme agitation, that it was impossible to understand the drift of what he said. Conscious himself of this he wrung his hands, with a look of helpless anguish glanced nervously round the room, made signs as if he were writing, and pointed to the quaking terrified maid, evidently wishing her to explain. Seeing that she in a stupor of wonder and evident agitation did not obey, he fell back on his pillow, and with tears slowly coursing each other down his pallid face fixed a look of unutterable sorrow on Robert, who now did all in his power to compose the old man's

mind by diverting his thoughts from everything of an agitating tendency. The dutiful and affectionate son thought nothing of importance compared with the invalid's comfort, and avoided afterwards whatever might possibly revive any painful recollections such as his aged father was evidently very little fitted to bear. Occasionally the old farmer started up on a sudden in his bed, and looked anxiously round, his whole soul in his eyes, as if terrified for the intrusion of some dreaded apparition; but the instant he saw Robert dutifully planted beside him, where night and day the young man, worn and sad, remained immoveably fixed, he sank back, weak and exhausted. The lines on his cheek were sharpened, and the light in his eye had become dim, when once only the old man again endeavoured to speak, but in such broken sentences that whether he were in his senses or not Robert could scarcely feel certain. His father pointed towards the maid, who was trying desperately to look quite unconscious, and muttered,—“She let him in. Was it a dream? What did I sign? Ask her—ask her. Are we beggars?”

With a vacant look, the old farmer fell shuddering on his pillow, but still pointed to the maid, who looked greatly confused, in a perfect agony of terror, and hurried out of the room, saying that her master was delirious, and that he frightened her by his insane raving. “But,” she added,

“not a Christian man, woman, or child has been within this door, sir, that you did not see!” She then murmured to herself, “I have not said, no Popish priest, for Father Eustace can scarcely be called a Christian, and besides, Mr. Robert saw him leaving the house, therefore as the priest said when he paid me that money, “it is no lie to make people believe what is false, if it seem on the whole best to do so.”

Bessie in the meanwhile had become indispensably useful to Lady Eaglescairn, who could scarcely be left ten minutes without requiring her worsteds to be arranged, or her screen to be moved, or her pillows to be tossed. No one else could be trusted to clean the bird cages, or to amuse the parrot, or to exercise the dogs; and she was the only person who could wash lace or trim caps to please that whimsical lady. She had to mix her medicine at night, to be up by daylight in the morning with a cup of tea, and more difficult than all, to bear with all Lady Eaglescairn’s humours. Her mistress became more *exigeante* every day, and angry at the smallest unintentional oversight; but Bessie, taught by Lady Edith to be active in duty, persevered from morning till night and from night till morning, from week to week and from month to month, in a course of thankless labour.

Bessie, when she entered Lady Eaglescairn’s service to learn the secrets of Romanism, had been

prepared by Mrs. Lorraine to find her mistress of a temper difficult to please, but she was not prepared for an impossibility. The first glimpses he got into the unreasonableness of Lady Eaglescain's requirements was the day after her arrival, when Monsieur Martini, the cook, appeared after breakfast to receive his orders, and Lady Eaglescain said to him in a languid but peremptory tone, "There has been a tiresome sameness in your luncheons lately, Martini, therefore pray think of something new to-day that one could fancy. I am wearied to death of game, ham, and butcher's meat, —fish, eggs, and pastry, I cannot endure another day,—soups, puddings, jellies, and creams are all detestable, and I wish to have no fruit, vegetables, pnddings, or preserves, no brown or white sauces, but give me something original to show your invention—a dish that we have never seen before."

The unfortunate Monsieur Martini shrugged his French shoulders as high as the most profound respect could allow, and looking most disconsolately perplexed, begged her ladyship to take the trouble of naming any *entrée* she could condescend to imagine.

"Well!" said Lady Eaglescain, in a tone of concession, "I do recollect once tasting something most exquisite at Prince Schwartzburgh's which you must try to imitate. I have not an idea what it could be made of, but the flavour seemed very peculiar. It was neither sour nor sweet, and it certainly

was not bitter. It had no spices, sugar, nor butter, but it was exquisite. Now, Martini, I have said enough and am wearied of the subject, but go off and try if you can send me up something similar."

Monsieur Martini retired in silent despair, and Bessie felt herself in a place where impossibilities were expected however impossible.

The only mark of gratitude that Lady Eaglescainr ever showed to her diligent attendant, Bessie, consisted in a most determined and authoritative effort to complete her conversion to Romanism. The day after Bessie's arrival, Lady Eaglescainr announced that she was to read aloud to her for some hours every day, and to attend her in the mornings to chapel.

"I can go with your ladyship to the door;" said Bessie, colouring deeply, "but my mind is not quite made up yet."

"Your mind!" exclaimed Lady Eaglescainr, in a tone of satirical contempt. "Nonsense! don't keep standing and stammering there, but get ready instantly."

"Please your ladyship, Mrs. Lorraine promised that I should not be hurried in my decision, and that I should not have to attend a Romish place of worship," answered Bessie, looking pale with consternation: "I cannot yet attend regularly at a Popish chapel."

Lady Eaglescainr looked aghast with indignation at this appearance of rebellion, and said im-

peratively: "Pshaw! nonsense! How can an ignorant girl like you understand such subjects? Father Eustace will explain them all: but many Protestants have no scruple in going to hear the music in our chapels. Even Protestant clergymen do so frequently abroad. If Mr. Clinton himself were at Rome he would do as Rome does."

"Oh, no! my lady, I am perfectly sure and certain Mr. Clinton would not."

"Mr Clinton came yesterday with Mrs. Lorraine to hear the private rehearsal of the anthem. In his own parish he must not come publicly; but he was quite charmed, so you have his example to sanction your coming, and you must."

Beatrice retained but one distinct trace of her early adventure on the ocean, which consisted in an extreme terror of bathing, boating, or any aquatic amusement connected with that most whimsical of elements the sea, which she quite coincided with Bishop Hall in considering as made for wonder and use, not for pleasure. Lady Edith used to observe that Beatrice had never even shown any childish pleasure in watching a paper boat, and the young girl herself smilingly added, that she could scarcely look at a watered silk dress without feeling squeamish; but she nevertheless delighted to walk, basket in hand, along the shore, an active curiosity-monger, collecting rare sea-weeds, beautiful shells

and curious spars, as well as in watching the fishermen bringing in their unfortunate captives. Free and joyous as the sea-gulls careering over her head, Beatrice set out one afternoon to visit Bessie's invalid mother, followed by a gardener's boy, to carry some fruit, wine, and vegetables to the cottage. As she stepped lightly along, almost within water-mark, admiring the bright brisk waves and all the glories of the boundless ocean, that solitary scene seemed to her like the world in its primæval state, when nothing had been created but the sea and the dry land. To Beatrice all nature was Christian, for she could trace out religion in the fields, in the garden, or in the firmament, in the dashing spray, or in the mountain breezes; and she was humming in an undertone to herself the words and air of Luther's Hymn, when, turning the sharp corner of a cliff, she observed far below the figure of Father Eustace landing from a small species of fishing boat common to that bay, and walking rapidly away he soon disappeared.

The sun, like a globe of living fire, touched the horizon, and lighted up the wide ocean into a sheet of burnished gold, and the glory of evening was on mountain, forest, and river. With a buoyant sense of sea-bird freedom, amidst all the joyous sights and sounds of nature, but still far distant from the lonely hut to which she was bending her

steps, Beatrice suddenly almost fancied that she heard a far-off shout, a distant cry for help. On looking round, however, not a human being was visible, nor a symptom of human life except a little old half-ruinous fisherman's boat, which lay moored in the nearest creek for the use of M^cRonald, who sometimes on very calm days persuaded her to go out in it with him to fish in Whiting Bay. Beatrice paused and listened intensely; when there arose apparently from the water a cry, shrill as ever gave expression to human distress, while her attention became instantly directed towards a sand-bank, which at low water she had sometimes paddled out to in the little boat with old M^cRonald, but which had a habit in spring-tides of being covered many feet deep beneath the waves. It was a favourite perch for the whole tribe of sea-birds, and Beatrice had often been shown one pointed eminence on which a regular sentinel bird was perched night and day, on the look-out for his more active companions, who relieved him in their turn. Sportsmen often assembled on that precipitous point from Eaglescairn, to shoot the gulls, hundreds of which were now clustering in noisy glee upon the rolling tide, shrieking with discordant delight in the air, and hovering merrily around the sea-girt rocks.

Again there was no sound except the sullen monotonous splash of the waves; but upon the

narrow summit of the rock Beatrice became almost certain that some human being was making signals of distress to her, and it seemed evident that his life, on such a precarious perch, must be as insecure as that of Sinbad on the back of a whale. With a look of startled apprehension she hurriedly called up the boy, who was following at some distance with her heavy basket, and asked him whether he did not perceive some moving object there. He gazed till they could no longer doubt the fact that there was a person signalling to them from that sea-girt stone which would evidently be in a few minutes washed over by the advancing waves. The next moment there arose the sound of a human voice in hoarse shrieking accents, calling with terrible earnestness for help. That cry thrilled through the very souls of those who heard it, while they looked across the boiling surge, and for an instant Beatrice stood helplessly panic-struck. The danger was immediate, and no aid but her own within a mile or two. She hesitated—a film for one moment darkened over her eyes, but she hastily collected her agitated thoughts, and seeing M^cRonald's almost ruinous old boat, leaky and dangerous as it appeared, she instantly sprung, lightly as any bird, into the precarious conveyance destined to carry her over a most uneven track, and calling to the boy who hurried after her, they pushed from the shore.

Unskilled as Beatrice and the gardener's boy were in the use of an oar, she had sometimes at the instigation of Lady Edith, who wished to overcome her extreme aversion to the sea, jestingly entered a boat with M^cRonald, and imitated the fishermen's wives and daughters in Clanmarina, who very frequently steered a small boat, such as her own, across the bay. Slowly, because with great difficulty, Beatrice advanced in the frail and leaky vessel, which rose on the crest of every wave, the white foam curling high around the bows; and as she at last neared the rock, white with the breaking surf, a covey of affrighted birds whirled up in noisy terror to the clouds. Beatrice looked at the world of waters around, which were encroaching and encroaching, advancing and advancing around the solitary tenant of the almost invisible spot, on which, to her utter amazement, stood the young stranger whom she had so often before encountered unexpectedly, but never so unexpectedly as now, when she perceived him with pale cheek, compressed lips, but firm expression of countenance and attitude, awaiting her slow and very uncertain progress. The small boat seemed leaking fast, and became heavier every moment, while at each stroke of the oars Beatrice and her boy-companion felt their strength more exhausted; but the head of the little vessel was at last within the stranger's grasp, and leaping lightly on board, he

silently took the oar from Beatrice, reached her his hat with which to bale out the water, and assisted by the gardener's boy, pulled so vigorously to the shore, that in much less than half the time they had taken to come, the endangered trio were safely stranded again in that creek from which the inexperienced navigators had so hastily started. All danger being over, Beatrice, like a true woman, began for the first time to feel the whole terror of that strange enterprise, which she had so generously encountered and so wonderfully achieved. Her face became pale as death, her lip quivered, she trembled and nearly sank on the ground, while her animated companion poured out a whole volley of warm-hearted thanks for her courageous preservation of his life. He spoke at first with a solemn earnestness very unlike indeed to his usual manner, but seeing that this too deeply affected her feelings, he with evident effort resumed his former rallying tone.

“ Truly Grace Darling was nothing to you ! Very few ladies in this wide world would have ventured to wet an oar in my service to-day ! You shall have the gold medal of the Humane Society, —this is quite a melo-dramatic adventure. I never expected to be so like a sea-gull in a storm. Father Eustace and I were pulling against each other, and he did not rightly describe the sunk rocks on which my frail bark was suddenly and

completely shattered. He had fallen far behind, when the accident occurred. My little cockle-shell sunk in a moment, and no shouting or signals of mine could catch his attention, therefore it is the more extraordinary and fortunate that they caught yours. I am like an Arctic voyager delivered from an iceberg."

Beatrice, whose pale face had been till now covered by her trembling hands, looked up when the priest was named, and at once described to her companion, in low trembling accents, the conduct of Father Eustace on landing from his own boat, in hurrying away without once looking round, a narrative to which the stranger listened with grave and intense interest. He then said in a musing tone:—

"Father Eustace must have lost his senses, if he ever had any! What can it all mean? The next heir of entail after myself is a keen, almost frantic Roman Catholic. The zealous priest might not, perhaps, be over-zealous to save so unruly a son of the Church as Mr. Cornelius O'Brien has lately been, but we are the best friends. He could scarcely intend to load his conscience, if he has one, with the crime of murder, and to make me food for those very fishes which we were so lately trying together to catch. Well! I do not wish any harm to Father Eustace, but I would give him 10,000*l.* a-year to live away from Eaglescairn Castle. His influence at Eagles-

cairn is a mystery beyond all fathoming, and if he or I are to be sent away, it will certainly not be him. I suppose he is now at the Castle expecting me home on a stretcher! How fortunate for me that you had a fit of courage in my hour of need;— though the loss of life would not have been to my mind the loss of anything much to be valued either by myself or others. I long ago discovered, like the little girl in Punch, that this world is hollow and my doll stuffed with saw-dust. You who preserved me have known little of life yet to make you, as I am, weary of it."

"Life is a gift to be very thankful for under any circumstances," replied Beatrice, with timid earnestness. "We should all value existence for its important uses. I love life for its kind affections and pleasant duties, though not afraid, when it must be so, to die. No one should ever admire or attempt a bravado of death. We read of it among criminals going to be executed, but with them in their last stage of wretchedness it is only the delirium of despair. No Christian can look over the brink of eternity without feeling greatly awed, and this day's adventure should make us both very serious."

"Right! you are perfectly and entirely right! Still danger in any shape always gives me a thrill of terrible enjoyment. When you see what an odd fish you have picked out of the water, shall you not long to throw me back? Now

I am glad of that smile ! It shows you still have a little laughter left in you to-day. The fact is, I positively feel enlivened into a state of super-felicity by this escape. *Le péril est comme le vin ; il monte la tête.* It is quite a pleasure to owe my safety to you ! When I leaped all dripping into the boat, my agility was like that of Sidney Smith's kangaroos, who hopped at the rate of five hops to a mile !”

Beatrice secretly smiled at herself for having thought it possible to strike a solemn chord in so volatile a mind as that of her companion, whose laughter and vivacity became cheering and brilliant as sunlight. He seemed resolutely bent on forgetting all that related to his recent adventure, except his gratitude to herself, which was the only thing she had no wish for him to remember, but on which he spoke again and again with most animated earnestness, laughingly adding,—“What news there might have been to-day for my three-hundred Scotch cousins, all hoping to be my heirs. For your sake I shall not make Father Eustace your enemy by repeating that story of turning a deaf ear to my shouts, which we cannot prove ; but I shall never venture to sea with that foreign priest again unless you are in sight.

“ ‘ Quoth Johnson—No man, sir, would be a sailor,
With sense to scrape acquaintance with a jailor.’ ”

Lady Edith, when Beatrice, her bright face

sparkling with animation gave an account of the day's adventure, felt secretly even more gratified than she chose to express, that her beloved young *protégée*, such a mere girl in appearance, though a woman in sense and feeling, had shown the most timely courage and judgment in so startling an emergency. Next morning she and Beatrice were busily employed in arranging their enormous basket with a supply of tracts, Bibles, and medicines for distribution, and putting the last touches to some little gingham frocks, when a pony-carriage whirled up to the door, from whence very self-important looking lady alighted, rustling in silks, and fluttering in lace and feathers.

A moment afterwards the boy in buttons breathlessly announced—"The Countess of Eaglescairn." The visitor's air of magnificent condescension on entering, as if the room were not large enough to contain her, reminded Beatrice of her own favourite peacock spreading his plumage in the sun; and her superb acknowledgment of Lady Edith's polite reception was stiff and frigid as the North Pole itself. Seeing that Lady Eaglescairn chose to continue cold as Wenham-lake ice, Lady Edith became snow. Very different was the aspect of haughty ease afterwards, but at the same time of most marked cordiality, amounting even to kindness, with which the dignified visitor turned to Beatrice, saying she had called on her in consequence of

the accident of yesterday. She then overwhelmed Beatrice at once by her consequential civilities, and with the most voluble thanks for her courageous conduct in delivering "dear Edward" from so frightful a danger. Who Edward was she evidently fancied it impossible that any one should not know, and Beatrice thought it easier to remain ignorant than to appear so by asking any questions about the *soi-disant* Mr. Cornelius O'Brien; for she felt that the eyes of Lady Eaglescairn were fastened upon her with a most elaborate stare of extreme curiosity.

Lady Eaglescairn patronizingly expressed her hope that the acquaintance now begun with Miss Farinelli might ripen soon into an intimate friendship, and it was evident that in saying so, she conferred an honour which the young lady could not but delightedly accept. There was something in the bustling, fussy self-importance of Lady Eaglescairn which Beatrice almost ventured to think vulgar, while she felt indignant at observing with what a little mutilated curtsy this self-important visitor acknowledged the graceful civilities of Lady Edith. If an iceberg had suddenly arrived, the whole atmosphere around Lady Eaglescairn could not have been more singularly chilling, for that dignified lady looked, in addressing any one, as if the world had been made for her, and for nobody else. Her consequential estrangement

from Lady Edith sealed her doom in the estimation of Beatrice, though to herself the visitor's manner was one of irreproachable politeness, tintured with a certain amount of condescension. Lady Edith was not like many persons, selfishly on the alert to observe small affronts, for she had that dignity of character which prevented her from supposing them intended, or from being irritated at such a person or personage as Lady Eaglescairn, if they really were. With graceful indifference, therefore, she resumed her occupation of arranging the parish basket, leaving this unexpected visitor to Beatrice, for whom the visit was so obviously intended, and in whose manner of receiving her superabundant patronage, there was much refinement of manner and even some youthful dignity.

"When can you come to spend a long time with us at Eaglescairn, Miss Farinelli? Let it be soon, and for at least ten days, said Lady Eaglescairn in a tone of arbitrary good humour. "We are all anxious to improve an acquaintance only too late of beginning."

Beatrice colouring deeply, and with a clandestine glance at Lady Edith for support, replied that she felt very sensible of the honour, and also of the kindness intended, but she never left her own cottage home ——— never.

"How long is that to last?" inquired Lady Eaglescairn, affecting a goodhumoured laugh, but

looking contemptuously round the room. "Are you to live and die like a moth in a bandbox? No! You must learn to steer your course in society now, as you steered it yesterday on the ocean alone."

"That would probably be the most difficult task of the two," replied Beatrice, smiling in return; "I should be equally out of my element in both."

The countenance of Lady Eaglescairn had in general little expression, except from a pair of singularly elevated eye-brows, giving her an aspect of unvarying surprise, which seemed, if possible, increased by hearing the answer of Beatrice; but she replied with a look of dignity and displeasure, as if all that her companion had said were mere words, of course meaning nothing—

"On what day shall I come for you in my carriage? After luncheon, to-morrow, would suit perfectly: my new Abigail is a *protégée* of yours, and will most delightedly attend on your toilette."

Beatrice looked as she felt, distressingly perplexed, for there was a tone of polite superiority in Lady Eaglescairn's manner which it was very difficult to resist from a personage so superior in age and rank to herself, who evidently considered it a matter of course that the proposed visit should begin the very day and hour she chose to name. Yet Lady Eaglescairn's marked avoidance of all attention to her own benefactress kept Beatrice firm, though it was in a tone of remorseful gratitude

to Lady Eaglescairn that with a hot blush and tremulous voice she again more earnestly declined the invitation, and she felt astonished at her own audacity in doing so. Lady Eaglescairn listened to her timid, but firm apologies, with an air of most majestic astonishment. Very proud, indeed, she looked, when with an aspect of self-importance that might have done for Britannia herself, and of greatly offended dignity, she at length retreated to her carriage.

Beatrice then, drawing a long breath of intense relief, turned to Lady Edith with her own charming smile,—very charming it was—saying, “Now the world is at liberty to go round again! I ought, perhaps, to be grateful for this honour, and I am; but that dreadfully condescending Lady Eaglescairn, looking all dignity and daggers at my own dear aunt Edith, terrifies me. Royalty itself can be nothing in comparison of her! She must be sister to the sun, moon, and stars! I would rather have gone into solitary confinement for a week to please anybody, than venture into such overpowering society without you, dear Lady Edith—you, who are more than a mother to me, and better than a friend. I would as soon have gone into the lions’ cage without Van Amburgh to protect me, as into a proselyting Popish house deprived of your kind companionship. What a singular laugh Lady Eaglescairn has! it sounds so unnatural and so

entirely without mirth ! It is a laugh of the lip, but not of the heart. She little thinks how unwilling I should be, for a single day, to leave all the pleasures and duties of our dear home and my only kind friend."

"How miserable it is to think of poor Bessie, ensnared by some unaccountable spell into that house!" observed Lady Edith in a musing tone. "Lady Eaglescairn used long ago to ridicule what she called my 'good Samaritan habits,' in giving with reckless prodigality a penny to one starving beggar, or a basin of water gruel to another; but I fear her contemptuous estimate of everything connected with Protestantism will take effect on an excitable imaginative girl, without much ballast, like poor well-meaning Bessie. She has disappointed me sadly; yet her conduct is mere delirium, kept up by those who are resolved to divide the poor girl from every natural duty or affection. How I should like to see her once more!"

Great ladies do very odd, free and easy things sometimes—at least so thought Lady Edith, who was not in general very easily astonished, when she received next morning, a note from Lady Eaglescairn, beginning "Dear Lady Edith." This cordial commencement was followed by a statement made in a tone of friendly familiarity, that Sir Allan McAlpine was expected at the Castle next week,

in order to canvass the county, which would occupy ten times more time than he had to spare, but that she and Lord Eaglescairn hoped Lady Edith would come immediately to pass a few days with them, and bring Miss Farinelli to meet her old companion, with whom she had been so long ago associated.

It was evident that Lady Eaglescairn, who was proverbial for never being balked in anything she once undertook, had determined to see Beatrice on a visit; and finding that she declined coming alone, this plan had occurred to her of inviting both the ladies from Heatherbrae, on their own terms.

A strange conflict in the warm heart of Lady Edith took place after reading this very unexpected note, and the colour rushed over her whole face with surprise and perplexity. Pride and prudence bid her reject an invitation unwillingly given, evidently with the sole object of securing Beatrice; and what the intention of these Popish intriguers could be in using this manœuvre to secure the presence of her young *protégée*, seemed very unaccountable. At the same time it was evident that the sole terms on which the priestly masters of Sir Allan would sanction his having any intercourse with herself, were that she should accept this rather peremptory invitation to Eaglescairn Castle; and Lady Edith, her heart overflowing with the most touching recollections of old times, resolved, *coute qui coute*, to go. "I must see Allan once again

before the irrevocable vows are upon him; he seems hopelessly lost to us, and to himself; but still, Beatrice, while we can pray, we must not cease to hope! I have a perfect reliance on the clear-sighted steadiness of your faith, and feel no apprehension in exposing you to the ordeal of living some days at Eaglescairn; therefore, let us go."

"Poor Bessie! how much she has lost by the influence of those Papists!" exclaimed Beatrice mournfully. "As for Allan, I dare not think of him. I cannot yet look the worst in the face; it would be more bitter than death if he became finally lost to his religion and to his country."

"The genius of Popery is wonderfully raising its head abroad now; rising out of the moral ruin of true religion," observed Lady Edith to Mrs. Clinton. "And even in England the attraction seems almost irresistible to some excited young minds, of a Romish ritual, abounding in music, painting, dresses, and decorations. Austerities, when performed from a feeling of exalted superstition, become the greatest of pleasures. The novelty recommends itself, sometimes even to the most degraded votaries of luxury and of dissipation; but how much more to the juvenile enthusiasm of Allan, his heart crushed and almost broken as it was by a succession of family bereavements!"

"But we are not to deserve the happiness of

another life merely by the sacrifice of this," replied Mrs. Clinton. "There is no Divine command to pay forfeit for our sins by scourging and starving! I saw several of the poor Papists, as I came here, crawling round inside the Chapel of St. Bridget on their bare knees, stopping at times before the altars of various saints to offer them prayers!"

"Such is the unnatural suicide of mind and body inculcated by those who would cramp, crush, and prematurely destroy all the divinely given functions of mind and body," observed Lady Edith thoughtfully. "How different from Protestantism, which is like a majestic cliff with flowers blooming at its feet, and the glorious light of heaven blazing on the summit."

"I read, lately," added Mrs. Clinton, "the book published in 1839 by a Cardinal, for the edification of those English readers who are invited to revolve obediently around the Popish hemisphere. One of the five newly canonized saints is described as taking for his only food a dish of soup, which was both insipid and disagreeable. The bread was black and not even leavened, and so hard that it was necessary to pound it in a mortar before he could eat it. This miserable food, which the five saints, recommended as our examples, ate kneeling, or stretched upon the ground, they rendered still more nauseous by sprinkling it over with some bitter stuff, and many of them before eating licked

the floor with their tongues. One day Liguori's secretary had to burst open his door and snatch the discipline out of his hand, fearing lest the violence with which he scourged himself might cause his death. Such is the monomania of Romanism; but my husband seems really most successful in opening the eyes of Mrs. Lorraine ! ”

“ I wish she may not rather blind his eyes, Mrs. Clinton,” answered Lady Edith very earnestly. “ Why does your excellent husband show an example in the village of associating so much with a proselyting Papist ? That woman has as many bad ingredients in her character as a witch's caldron, and is surely dangerous both to himself and to his parishioners ! ”

“ Quite a mistake ! ” replied Mrs. Clinton, good-humouredly laughing. “ Mrs. Lorraine makes no impression on him, and says she has no earthly object but to improve herself by his arguments.”

CHAPTER VI.

“ And all in high baronial pride,
A life both dull and dignified.”

As the chariot whirled along which conveyed two rather unwilling visitors to Eaglescairn, Lady Edith's sensitive feelings shrank from the thought that she was received merely as a necessary evil, in association with her beloved Beatrice, and no sacrifice among the many she daily made in a long life had been less in accordance with her taste than thus to accept an invitation so ungraciously given. The motive was a pure and holy desire to see, once more, the young heir of Sir Evan, formerly so dear to her, and still the object of so much sorrowful solicitude, but it was with no hope remaining that she might snatch him back from the snare into which he had been entrapped. Lady Edith knew now, from all report, that Sir Allan was no longer as the stranger had described, “in a state of half-and-half-ism,” but was fallen into that mental delirium beyond the reach of reason or argument, in which the obedient votaries of superstition are held, by the priest keeping them feverish

with starvation, sleeplessness, and terror-struck austerities. The progress of such feelings is imperceptible as the shades of evening darkening into night. No! Allan had rushed on blindfold, now beyond the reach of argument, of affection, of reason, but still he was Allan, the dearly beloved inmate of her old home, the object of her most affectionate solicitude, and she must look upon him once more, while yet his perversion was not finally sealed, while yet he had not fallen into the dark abyss of error and perdition yawning at his feet, while yet the grief she felt for him was not utterly without hope.

To the young eyes of Beatrice, the grey towers of Eaglescainr Castle always had a spectral aspect, so tall, gaunt and dismal, but it seemed to her an unreal dream that she was now about to be enclosed within the very heart of this Popish fortress, and there, for the first time, to meet again Allan M^cAlpine, now probably as much divided from herself in every hope and feeling as if they belonged to two different worlds. It seemed a dismal end of their long and happy intercourse in childhood and early youth; but she felt with almost heart-broken grief that this meeting was probably but the precursor to a last farewell.

Home had once been to Beatrice almost an earthly Paradise, and it would have been so still, but for the one dark spot in her thoughts, the gloomy

apprehension of what awaited Allan hereafter, were he to join that church which exacts the blind obedience of a brute to authority, rather than the enlightened conformity of a rational being to principle; and she thought how different from that of any Pope had been the teaching of St. Peter, when he tells Christians, "Be always ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you."

"Strange to see in our own sensible Scotland such a sight as that!" exclaimed Lady Edith, as they drove past the popish half of Clanmarina, a dark spot in that beautiful panorama, for it was one scene of universal filth, ignorance, profligacy, discontent, and ferocity, only to be matched in priest-ridden Ireland. The people were neglected in body, in house, and soul, by Father Eustace, who only proved his existence by ruling their consciences with a rod of iron, by emptying their purses with a face of brass, and by dividing their families with a heart of steel.

On this day, he had promised miraculously to cure the potato blight, and assembled all his ragged votaries round the Holy Well of St. Bridget, where the priest now stood surrounded by a crowd of votaries calling on their patron saint to remedy this disease. The shrubs around were hung with rags as evidences of the cures still to be performed. Many wore charms and scapulars blessed by Father Eustace to keep them from harm, and they

all carried beads, candles, crucifixes, ashes, oil, images, and pictures. In a recess near the entrance to the chapel, several squalid looking villagers were kneeling before an image of St. Bridget, and frantically muttering Latin prayers which they could not understand.

“Yes! the highest success of Popery is the utter prostration of mind,” said Lady Edith indignantly, “as well as the loss of liberty, personal and mental, the breaking of every tie, and the extinction of every affection. Poor Allan! Who does not say that our worst enemy is he who has thus enslaved him? I would give my heart’s best blood for his deliverance.”

“A fine chapel, like that of Eaglescairn, without moral purity, reminds me of a gaudy sign on an ill-kept inn!” observed Beatrice, musingly; “and there comes Father Eustace, the Cardinal of Clamarina, going to perform his daily crop of miracles with the thumb of St. Bridget, or the hair of St. Lucretia Borgia; for I dare say she has been canonized, as the Papists are not particular. If Father Eustace introduced the car of Juggernaut among these Popish villagers, the poor creatures would prostrate themselves under it. M^cRonald tells me that our unfortunate misguided Bessie is obliged to lick the floor with her tongue very frequently, as a penance! She has entirely relinquished soap, and is to wear the same unwashed

gown night and day, sleeping or waking, healthy or sick, living or dying, until it fall to pieces."

Lady Edith's heart fluttered, with an unusual feeling of shyness, when she heard the loud-toned bell which heralded her arrival before the grand Castle-of-Otranto-looking towers and massive gates of Eaglescairn Castle; and Beatrice wished for a moment that she could have joined the herd of deer which timidly retreated into the thicket as she approached. It was a noble impressive structure, though stern and gloomy in aspect. Nothing indeed could be more grand, more beautiful, or more dismal than the long range of arched windows and fortified turrets. These were washed at their base by a rapid stream, which fell glittering down the mountain side, like a shower of silver, and whirled, with a pleasant rushing noise, like laughter itself, gurgling and chafing over its rocky bed, till lost in the distant ocean. The wooded mountains rose in rugged grandeur above the gigantic cliffs of Clanmarina, and the banks in summer were enlivened by groups of wild flowers clinging to the old grey rocks, or scattered beneath the gnarled oaks and fluttering birch-trees.

A numerous cluster of powdered servants in gorgeous liveries appeared in the stately entrance-hall, and Lady Edith, her heart filled with the hope of seeing Sir Allan, felt herself almost absently witnessing the assiduous attentions paid

by Lord and Lady Eaglescain to Beatrice, while a very stiff and scanty portion of civility fell to her own share. It required no miraculous degree of clairvoyance to show Lady Edith that there was an intention, if possible, to take exclusive possession of Beatrice during this visit. Their two rooms, when the visitors were conducted to see them, were as far apart as possible; but not a momentary doubt crossed the mind of Lady Edith, in considering this evident plan more deliberately alone, that her beloved young *protégée* would be unalterably constant to the faith and affections of her childhood, whatever means might be used to ensnare her from them.

Beatrice looked surpassingly beautiful, with the shy bright glance of her splendid eyes, and the heightened colour which burned on her cheek, deepened to scarlet by the agitation of her entrance into a house which she had so long looked at with an almost superstitious awe, as seen from the distant, humble, happy home of all her own past life. She gazed with apprehensive solemnity at the portraits of saints and martyrs round the walls, as well as at the grotesque-looking portraits of many an ancient Earl who had flourished within these gloomy walls since the days of the Crusaders. On a black marble pedestal at one end of the drawing-room stood the cross which had been borne by Godfrey, first Lord of Iona, at the siege

of Acre, and the tables around it were littered with flowers, music, magazines, new publications, and expensive toys.

Nothing could exceed the stateliness and formality of Lady Edith's reception, to whom Lady Eaglescairn made a perfectly unsurpassable curtsy, while Lord Eaglescairn, in his odd, abrupt way, said,

"It is useless to say we are happy to see you, as I never invite any one here, but those that I wish to come. Lady Edith, you and I have kept our distance like a couple of mile-stones these many long years, but we are both looking younger and handsomer than ever! I have lived two lifetimes myself, for so many men die before thirty, that being myself a moss-grown old man of sixty now, my life has been as long as two."

"Then, as I am far on for eighty," replied Lady Edith, smiling, "I ought to count for three; and very interesting lives they have all been, the last stage perhaps the most so."

Lady Eaglescairn having, with ostentatious condescension, welcomed Beatrice into her rather formidable presence, seemed anxious, in a tone of benignant superiority, and with two-handed cordiality, to make her feel at home, as well as to extinguish all recollection of Lady Edith's presence from her memory; as soon as the common decencies of civility had been paid. While Lady Eaglescairn was condescending enough to con-

tinue her conversation with Beatrice, the dialogue chiefly consisted of her asking a rapid succession of rather impertinent questions; and it seemed as if there could not be a human being on earth whom it would be possible for Lady Eaglescain to consider her own equal.

Lady Edith enjoyed that repose of character which finds perfect contentment in being valued at her own worth as it appeared in the eyes of those with whom she associated; but Lady Eaglescain's pride was that which must be elevated by the depression of others. It was her great pleasure in all society where she had any influence, to make one doomed individual feel excluded, and look as like as she could make him to a Pariah in banishment on his mat. It was very seldom Lady Eaglescain had it in her power, as now, to exercise her haughty indifference on one whose feelings of dignified independence rendered her, like Lady Edith, so little liable to feel annoyed, and still less humbled, by becoming the object of petty malignity and such unaccountable rudeness.

The sight of even a trifling occupation is always interesting, but no one in the large cavern of a drawing-room at Eaglescain seemed to have the shadow of an employment. Beatrice, now for the first time trying her wing in general society, looked round with wonder at the circle of loungers among whom she had been suddenly precipitated.

The whole party were occupied in teaching a little white French poodle to beg for a bit of biscuit, and laughing at his successful appeals to the compassion of his master, Mr. Cornelius O'Brien, who now seemed to consider Beatrice an old friend. The instant he could do so without becoming conspicuous, the lively, laughter-loving stranger, full of life and elasticity, crossed the room and placed himself beside Beatrice, saying in a tone of animated welcome—

“It is easier to tear a limpet from the solid rock, than you from your quiet home! Why would you not come? Were you afraid that we should not like you, or that you could not like us?”

“Perhaps both,” replied Beatrice, her face beautifully flushed; but a smile glittering in her eyes, “I am, like you, very shy.”

“We are not at all formidable when you know us thoroughly,” continued her lively companion, with a laugh of triumphant happiness; “but you have now at first a look of most comical discomfort! Do not expect too much from us. None of the ladies here are Corrinnes, and I am the only gentleman who can be compared to Sir Philip Sidney or Sir Charles Grandison. Let me tell you who all these people are!”

“I am afraid, from that satirical look, you are going to be very ill-natured upon them!”

“I am neither ill-natured nor good-natured,

but sternly truthful; and am ready to say, if that will please you, that all the ladies here are beautiful and all the gentlemen clever. You look most savagely determined not to listen," replied he, glancing at Beatrice's bright smiling countenance. "You always seem inclined to treat me as the dog treats the monkey on his back, trying to throw me off; but I have an iron will and make everything bend to it. That is a way I have got, and therefore you shall invariably find it least troublesome to let me enjoy my own will at once; for sooner or later I must have it. All my life I have walked arm in arm with good-fortune, and never was balked in anything that I had set my heart on!"

"You are a wizard then, I suppose, or perhaps only a magician; the one can tell what is to happen, and the other brings it about. I like obstinate and determined people, for I am sometimes totally unpersuadable myself."

"So I think, indeed; for we had to submit to your own terms before you would come here to let us have the pleasure of admiring you! Donna Beatrice would not stir without her excellent Duenna, Lady Edith, and if you are not exceedingly civil to me I know how to punish you by neglecting her. What did you apprehend from coming alone? Are we enemies, whose bread and salt you would not eat?" asked her companion,

humorously working himself up to a perfect paroxysm of mingled amusement and irritation. "I did not close an eye for several nights after you refused to come."

"Of course! You look quite emaciated and melancholy in consequence!" replied Beatrice, slyly. "But nevertheless you can still subscribe some spare nonsense to amuse us all!"

"Surely no young lady ever was or ever will be insensible to such devoted assiduity as mine! I once had a friend as cavalierly treated by the young lady he admired most in the world, as you treat me; and, poor fellow! he went at last to the place where he died."

"Indeed!" said Beatrice earnestly. "Where did he go?"

"To the Highland moors; where a gun burst and killed him. See now what you may bring me to. Pray take warning, Miss Farinelli; but instead of doing so, you seem merely inclined to say to poor inoffensive me now, as uncle Toby did to the fly that tormented him, 'Go! I'll not hurt a hair of thy head!'"

"You invent so many speeches and feelings for me, that really I need not take the trouble of thinking or speaking at all while you remain here," said Beatrice, the most beautiful smile quivering round her mouth, and dimpling on her cheek, that any young countenance could have

displayed. "Is your visit here to last as long as ours?"

"Visit! I am at home. Nobody recognises such an absentee as I have been. Do you still seriously and in good earnest suppose me Mr. O'Brien? That is delightfully romantic. Let me consider! Who shall I pass myself off for next?—Shall it be Sir Allan?"

"Impossible, I know him;" replied Beatrice, with sudden agitation, and the colour which flooded her cheek for a moment retreated again as rapidly, while her companion kept an inquisitorial glance of deep interest fixed upon her varying countenance, till she recovered herself, and added with a bewitching smile, "Be anybody else!"

"Let me, at all events, be your most devoted slave; and truly, I do not wonder that the sun is dim to-day, for his beams are so eclipsed by your smiles! I have not found you hitherto very encouraging to my civilities, but here at Eaglescain you must submit as a necessary evil to my presence and attentions. In this old castle you will soon be the "Hare with Many Friends," and ten thousand admirers; therefore, you will have scarcely half an eye or half an ear to spare for me at any time. However, come what may, you can scarcely treat me worse than you already do:—

"Perhaps it is right to dissemble your love,
But why do you kick me down stairs?"

Beatrice could not restrain one of her own low ringing laughs, at the perfect burlesque of sentiment with which these lines were recited, while her rattling companion added,—“ I could fight any number of windmills in your cause, therefore do pray give me something of the kind to do. As for Sir Allan, he would be a lover more in the Werter and St. Preux school than I, but he seems bent on becoming a Jesuit Priest. On the same day that he sacrifices himself to St. Ignatius, my cousin Lady Anne Darlington, who is sitting there in the window, proposes to take the veil,—but I must say,” added he, with a rather grotesque look, “ that for two people who both intend to utter vows of perpetual celibacy, they seemed at Rome immensely interested in each other, exchanging half-withered flowers, singing duets together, and, in short, carrying on a sort of demi-semi flirtation.”

“ Indeed ? ” said Beatrice, brightening up with eager satisfaction. “ They may perhaps rescue one another from those calamitous vows of poverty, celibacy, silence, and starvation, and be happy together yet. How delighted I should be ! ”

“ Should you really ? ” replied her companion, looking earnestly at the frank open countenance of Beatrice, to see if she were truly sincere, and much pleased evidently by the result of his scrutiny. “ They firmly believe the intimacy to be entirely a Platonic friendship, but I think if Sir Allan were

to get one confession from my cousin Anne, it would be a very important one,—and then he may let his hair still grow instead of becoming tonsured. Sir Allan might say to Anne, on the subject of this excited freak she has planned of taking the veil, as I did once at Rome—

“ Oh ! by the sacred tears
Of lovers, sisters, mothers, aunts, forbear ! ”

“ I heartily wish he would. I feel as if I could pull down mountains to hide Allan from those ensnaring priests,” replied Beatrice earnestly. “ Anything rather than lose my old companion in a way worse than death—a thousand times worse ! ”

“ My cousin Anne, an heiress with every wish anticipated, trades upon sympathy, and lives in an incessant April shower on imaginary distresses. She would despise mere common-place happiness, but fancies that in a state of inexorable solitude she can lock out every grievance with the key of her cell. Father Eustace paints a perfect castle-in-the-air life in a convent, where she is to be a good fairy, performing miracles, manufacturing sweetmeats, sweeping her own cell, making her own bed, and seeing supernatural visions. Lady Anne was always, from childhood, an enthusiastic do-nothing girl, with some good links in her character, though they do not make a chain, and in the hands of that crafty priest she is utterly

lost. One regrets to see so much good enthusiasm thrown away. Therefore, suppose you and I become match-makers while we are here, and counteract this popish plot against Sir Allan and my young cousin."

"With all my heart," replied Beatrice, frankly, and she felt a glow of pleasure at the thought of perhaps assisting to rescue Allan from the snare into which he seemed now so nearly falling. "It would indeed be a great felicity to frustrate a conspiracy against the fortune, liberty, and happiness of one who was formerly like a brother to me."

"And my pretty heedless cousin Anne may take other vows than Father Eustace intends. She had a tawdry governess who taught her nothing useful, and Anne might be made Professor of Ignorance on every subject but music and painting; therefore she is flattered up to the highest pitch of human vanity about her singing, and is to change her name on taking the veil to that of St. Cecilia. Oh! that strange, plotting, fathomless Father Eustace! How easily he assumes the external aspect of piety, the demure look, the crouching walk, the peculiar dress, the measured accent, his eyes on the ground, instead of looking frankly in the face of others. Of such pretension where are the fruits, except in the fraud or force by which he rules others in a tone of more than regal authority. The imaums

or muftis I saw in the East are nothing in spiritual pride to him; and how I do prefer the good, honest, open-hearted Vicar of Wakefield clergymen, such as your Mr. Clinton!"

"Do not he and Mrs. Clinton come here to-day?" asked Beatrice.

"Yes; and our people do nothing but praise him in this house now!" said Lord Iona. "Such a change!"

"Certainly the change in his costume of late is very striking," observed Beatrice, anxiously; "a perfect cascade of white neck-cloth, a strange-looking waistcoat, and the very peculiar cut of his coat, as if he had borrowed one from Father Eustace."

"Perhaps he has, and may be persuaded to be a turn-coat besides. A mere feather shows which way the wind blows, and it blows now towards Rome. He looks as solemn now as if the world's gravity depended on Mr. Clinton alone."

Beatrice, much entertained at the rambling patch-work style of her companion's rattling small-talk, listened to his very sketchy and rather satirical remarks with a compound smile of amusement and reproach, while he secretly watched with admiring interest the varying expression of her beautiful countenance. Beatrice felt astonished once, on glancing hastily up, to perceive Lord Eaglescain seated alone, at some distance, looking like a good-natured mastiff, and watching with unmistakeable pleasure, as well as approbation, the rather pro-

longed dialogue which was taking place between herself and her lively companion. Even Lady Eaglescairn, with all her consequential nonchalance, might have been observed, now and then, to glance hurriedly round, as if to watch whether they were still together, and seemed pleased to ascertain that they were.

“How much Lord Eaglescairn seems interested in either you or me!” observed Beatrice, aside.
“Twice within this minute I have caught his eye.”

“A frugal swain,
Whose constant care is to increase his store,
And keep his only son, myself, at home.”

“Must I then introduce myself?” said Mr. O’Brien, assuming a look of grave decorum, which ended in a laugh of almost frantic glee, “‘My name is Norval,’ or at least it is Edward Lord Iona; and as very little good is said among you Protestants at Clanmarina of poor me, or of even the best in this house, I carefully concealed my birth, parentage, and education, till you and Lady Edith were both safely caged in our popish fortress, where I hope you may long continue willing captives.”

Lord Iona enjoyed his own little practical joke so joyously that he had evidently forgotten how to leave off laughing, as he added in a tone of polite risibility, “When you want a pen mended, a book cut open, a bouquet gathered, a new novel read aloud, a song accompanied, a harp-string repaired,

or an escort on horseback, I am your slave. Do not reject my services," said Lord Iona, in an under tone, "or I shall be reduced to absolute despair, or at least to hopeless ennui."

As Beatrice rose to depart, he tried to detain her, and sang in an under-tone, but in most beautiful cadence these words :—

"One struggle more, and I am free
From pangs that rend my heart in twain ;
One long last sigh to love and thee,
Then back to busy life again."

When Beatrice was shown to her room an hour before luncheon, to take off her bonnet, she thought with smiling pleasure of her agreeable companion, Lord Iona ; and certainly gave a glance of more than usual interest at her own face in the mirror. Beatrice found, instead of Lady Edith's maid in attendance, one of Lady Eaglescairn's, a prim and formal personage in the dress of "a religious," who with officious, though very majestic civility, had unpacked her boxes, and said that Lady Edith's room being so distant, she had "her Ladyship's orders to attend on Miss Farinelli."

In the progress of time this personage turned out so well read, and so well informed, that it became evident she had once seen much better days ; and a suspicion soon took possession of Beatrice that a Jesuit lady had been placed about her for proselyting purposes, who merely acted the part of Abigail "for one day only, and by particular

desire!" Beatrice felt grievously disappointed, that if any one was to officiate in doing the very little she required, it was obviously not to be Bessie M^cRonald, for whom she now ventured to make inquiry.

"You mean the new girl who is under me?" replied the consequential severe-looking attendant, in a tone of disdainful civility to Beatrice, who felt rebuked. "She is not fit to wait upon strangers yet, and her Ladyship desires that she shall remain entirely under my own eye."

"Could I see her?" asked Beatrice timidly; "she was long one of my scholars at Clanmarina, and ——"

"I'm afraid not," replied Madame Mettarie, assuming the short, peremptory offended tone of a true toilet-tyrant, "Father Eustace gave very particular directions that she should be as solitary and silent as possible all this month. She has to use the discipline twice every day, and Bessie M^cRonald herself has now requested that her bed may be like that used by St. Rose of Lima, stuffed with knotty lumps of wood, and broken pieces of pottery. She is resolved to be a true Saint."

"Poor Bessie!" exclaimed Beatrice in a tone of pity and consternation: "how is she to sleep on such a couch as that?"

"Why should she sleep?" asked Mrs. Mettarie in a fanatical tone; "Sister Mary of Sicily used a pillow of thorns; and our good St. Peter of Alcan-

tara, during forty years, slept only an hour, or at most an hour and a half each night!"

"But the poor girl cannot possibly live under such austerities!"

"There is no occasion to live. Those who would be eminent saints must soar above the love of life," replied Madame Mettarie, in a tone of superiority. "We all in this house wear coarse hair shirts from the neck to the knees, like that of the exemplary saint, Sancia Cariglio."

"You had much better put on hair petticoats instead," said Beatrice, unable to help smiling. "How can you think such a useless bodily torture meritorious?"

"We do not think," replied Madame Mettarie, solemnly. "Perfect obedience to Father Eustace requires a soul without a will, and a will without an intellect."

"So it appears!" answered Beatrice, indignantly. "Did our Creator give an intellect to every individual in this house, that only one may use it?"

"Any layman presuming to follow his own opinion, follows the opinion of a fool," replied Madame Mettarie. "When St. Francis commanded his disciples to plant cabbages with their roots uppermost, they obeyed; and he obliged brother Matthew to whirl round and round till he fell on the floor; but such blind obedience is good for us.

Above all, we should seek to be poor in money and offend not against poverty, but give all we have to Father Eustace for the Church. Every shilling held back is a sin. Silence, solitude, and poverty are all we may desire, and our prayer should be that of Ignatius, ‘Show me, Lord, the way in which I ought to walk, and though you should give me a dog for my guide, I will follow him.’”

Beatrice was very glad to be herself left solitary and silent both, when Madame Mettarie swept herself, in a state of humble self-importance, out of the room, and she soon after proceeded to try the difficult navigation of finding her way through the winding, innumerable passages and fragments of stairs to Lady Edith’s room. Beatrice felt herself a perfect Ariadne threading through such a labyrinth! She had either gone up or down the wrong flight, and was turning to retrace her mistaken footsteps, when she observed a nun-like figure clothed in a black serge gown, a rope round her waist, and a white conventual-looking head-dress like that of a corpse, walking slowly and very feebly along a narrow passage at some distance, and as she paused to observe this picturesque-looking apparition, the object of her notice stopped near a door, and glanced round before she disappeared within it. Beatrice, to her astonishment, at once then recognised the pale and emaciated but still

beautiful countenance of Bessie McRonalld. A sudden impulse which she could not restrain made her rush forward, and though the door had been hurriedly closed behind her former favourite, Beatrice without a moment's hesitation threw it open and entered, determined at length to satisfy her mind whether the misguided girl in leaving home were blameable or unfortunate, or both, or neither.

In a small half-dark room, without carpet, curtains, or a single article of even necessary comfort, Bessie lay prostrate her whole length on the bare floor, and it almost appeared to the startled mind of Beatrice that she was licking the deal boards with her tongue.

"Can this poor girl be really quite insane? Does she not require medical advice, or medical restraint?" thought Beatrice, advancing resolutely up to Bessie, and gently taking her hand. The girl gazed hurriedly up, an expression of abject terror at first stamped on every feature; but starting and colouring, with a look of almost speechless amazement at Beatrice, she covered up her face with her long dishevelled hair, and exclaimed in an under tone, "Miss Farinelli! I thought it had been Father Eustace! He comes here every day for an hour to see me alone—quite alone. Oh, Miss Farinelli, you must go! Pardon me! He would be so angry to see you or any one here! I must see him alone!—always alone!"

Bessie covered her face with her hands. They trembled visibly, and catching up a crucifix from a little moveable oratory which stood near, she deluged it with her tears. A long silence ensued, during which Bessie's agitation seemed if possible to increase. Her breath came in short quick gasps, and the little of her face which remained visible was white as death.

"Bessie," said Beatrice, in a tone of mournful kindness, "I had determined not to leave this house without seeing you, and this early meeting seems quite providential. Tell your old friend and true well-wisher,—are you happy here?"

No answer came, but her whole frame shook with emotion, her hands filled with her long fair hair, which hung in masses down her cheek, became more firmly clenched against her face, and a deep convulsive sob, in spite of an evident struggle, forced itself out and would be heard.

"I love and pity you," continued Beatrice, kindly. "You made a well-meant but perfectly uncalled-for sacrifice in forsaking home and all who were your real friends. Do you not wish now to see once more your good old uncle?"

"If I could but die!" said Bessie in a low hurried whisper, and her whole aspect was one of sinking misery; "the sooner the better!—the sooner the better! and it will be soon. I have a vow to taste nothing to-day, but it takes longer

than I thought to die of sleeplessness and starvation. Look here!"

Bessie tore open her dress and showed that beneath a hair shift she wore a large iron cross, spiked with nails, which fretted the delicate white skin off her neck. "There! you see that! I neither eat nor sleep; but I have such visions! Yes! I am happy!" said Bessy, with a ghastly smile, and with her eye fixed on the open door at which appeared the dark, handsome, but very stern countenance of Father Eustace, his eyes on the ground, his hands crossed, and his face, if possible, longer and graver than ever. "Miss Farinelli!" added Bessie, in a tone of solemn excitement, which seemed to Beatrice mere mid-summer madness; "we shall meet no more on earth, but after my death I shall appear to you! I shall watch over you! I shall —"

"Surely, Sir!" said Beatrice, turning to Father Eustace, with deep emotions of pity for the poor delirious girl, while he listened in scornful silence, "you cannot consider poor Bessie in her rational senses. She is not at this moment a responsible being! Her relations ought to be sent for. She has an uncle who would die for her—a mother who doats on her—a—"

"The low grovelling attachments of this life are not for a mind exalted as hers," replied Father Eustace, pointing an obstinate looking finger to—

wards the agitated girl. "She remains here from choice. Tell this lady herself, my daughter, that you never knew happiness till now. Tell her your real feelings on the subject."

"Yes: I am happy! I am quite happy!" answered Bessie, forcing a short hysterical laugh: "I saw such a vision in the garden yesterday, bright and shining as the sun. I am very happy."

She clasped her hands with a look of delirious enthusiasm and looked upwards, her brilliant eyes glowing with unnatural fire, and the colour rising to her cheek like waves of the sea. Father Eustace and Beatrice gazed at the beautiful visionary with very different feelings, and while a tear of pity rolled silently and heavily down the cheek of Beatrice, Father Eustace looked on with a smile of triumphant satisfaction. A moment more and Bessie sunk upon the floor in strong convulsions. Months afterwards did Beatrice remember in trembling horror the shrieking laughter with which that poor girl kept for ever repeating, in anxious obedience to Father Eustace's command, "Yes; I am happy! I am happy! oh yes; I am happy!"

"May all those we love be protected from such happiness!" exclaimed Lady Edith, with solemn fervour, when she heard the agitated narrative of Beatrice. "That father-and-daughter system in the Romish Church is an outrage on nature, and language cannot express its evils."

Beatrice had a thousand little good-hearted indiscretions twinkling in her eyes on Bessie's behalf, and all kinds of nearly insane impulses at work in her mind. She wished to rescue her favourite, to denounce everybody at Eaglescairn, to carry off Bessie by stratagem, or to get somebody to write a letter to the *Times*, the grand resource for all public or private grievances; but the venerable calmness of Lady Edith's mind soon tamed down Beatrice to the limits of prudence. "You must implicitly trust all to a kind Providence, and pray for Bessie, my dear warm-hearted Beatrice; but never hope to see or hear of her more while we remain here, There is not a twig to hang a chance upon of your meeting her again, for she will not, while you stay, be left long enough alone for a single wink."

CHAPTER VII.

"I sit with sad civility, I read
With honest anguish and an aching head."—POPE.

To Lady Edith Tremorne all the withered joys and hopes of her past life had been like autumn leaves that fertilize the soil and bring out its noblest fruits. In contrast to her look of graceful and intellectual simplicity in the assembled party, no one ever had an air of more insolent prosperity than the ultra-dignified Lady Eaglescairn, when, after having returned from her forenoon prayers at the Popish Chapel, where she had been prostrate on the bare stone-floor before the image of St. Bridget for an hour, she now with queen-like stateliness accompanied her guests to luncheon. How seldom do those whose privilege it might be to render a circle pleasant, deny themselves the gratification of making it disagreeable! Lady Eaglescairn had that most intolerable of all self-conceit, which is displayed by talking continually in a pompous self-satisfied tone of her own humility; and now with a look of prodigious patronage, she took the arm of Beatrice to accompany her through the

large old marble hall. It looked lofty and dull as an empty church, and Lady Eaglescairn spoke to her young guest with the sort of acknowledged superiority and kindness which she might have used towards a favourite little spaniel. In general no smile is so gratifying as that which it is difficult to gain, and those who have, like Lady Eaglescairn, a genius for rendering themselves disagreeable, excite so pleasing a surprise when it is their whim to be pleasant, that it tells with double effect; but Beatrice felt more the annoyance of seeing Lady Edith neglected than the flattering preference lavished on herself.

Beatrice, in a state of total discomfort, took her place at the pompous luncheon-table. She had fallen into a perfectly statue-like silence, being above all, vexed and astonished to see the marked neglect shown to the person she venerated above all on earth, though Lady Edith's own distinguished nature prevented her feeling at all humiliated by the ill-manners of another. Beatrice, contrasting her own happy home with the present scene of magnificent exclusiveness, the grandest and dullest entertainment she had ever sat down to, thought how truly it has been said, "Better is a crust of bread where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith."

Lady Edith seemed almost to read the mind of Beatrice, for at this moment their eyes met, and

the smile of her beloved benefactress, full of dignity and sweetness, was the only sunbeam in the room. One lady after another dropped in to luncheon with a quite-at-home look, and sat down in lazy silence, to eat with uncommunicative appetite; and if any one spoke at all it was in a whisper to her nearest neighbour, while anxiously and fastidiously surveying every dish within the range of their sight.

At length an empty seat next to Beatrice became suddenly occupied by her lively friend Lord Iona, whom Lady Eaglescairn had evidently expected to sit there, for she smiled with her most benignant smile as he appropriated it to himself and as he turned to Beatrice saying, "I am come to torment you again, Miss Farinelli, and to have some of our usual conversation about nothing! Let me help you now to discuss the knife and fork question. While I remain in this house, you shall never be without a shadow."

"Then I might sell my own, like Peter Schlemihl," replied Beatrice, laughing. "But the poor man missed his sadly when gone!"

"As you would miss me. Well! you put on a stern forbidding mask to me externally, but I hope it is in jest, and that a smiling face is behind! It really is kind of you to come here and enliven the slowest of all houses!"

"Perhaps it may be my misfortune to make it still slower!"

“That would be quite beyond human power. Father Eustace, who rules in this Castle, is not like the Vicar of Wakefield, an admirer of happy human faces. There are, however, in this tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee-society of my mother’s favourite friends, some rather diverting persons, if properly studied. As Rochefoucault says, ‘People generally make themselves ridiculous, not for what they are, but for what they pretend to be.’ Since you have made your *debût* to-day on our stage, I must introduce you to the actors, and as I never tell fibs even in jest, you must be told how blotted and disfigured is the page of most lives here by folly and affectation. I shall give you an inquisitorial survey of all these people’s private histories and characters.”

“Not here! not now in their presence!” whispered Beatrice, hurriedly, and then added with an arch smile of humour, “unless, indeed, you choose to begin with your own.”

“What a knavish suggestion of yours to draw out all my egotism. Well! ask ten thousand questions, and let me answer them. After that, since truth is truth, I shall tell you all my good qualities more truly than if I were a magneto-scope, beginning, as autobiographies usually do, —‘I was born of respectable parents in the county of Blankshire——’”

“To end with all your most confidential letters

and most private remarks!" added Beatrice, giving a low musical laugh. "I should be quite afraid of becoming celebrated myself now, in case some hungry author might poison me to make a profit of my memoirs."

"Nobody escapes appearing in the press, and few wish to escape. Observe my cousin Anne's popish governess at the other end of this table in white, fit to be a frontispiece to the '*Magazin des Modes*.' She always wears a muslin robe, having read that it is the usual costume of heroines, and tries to look as like as possible to a blushing rosebud. Anne says Miss 'Turton asked one day at the milliner's for a 'sentimental bonnet,' and her governess-ship keeps a diary for no eye but her own, which is to be published as soon as she takes the veil in a convent, to which she is going soon at Inverness. That will be a grand piece of excitement for her next month. Miss Turton is vain to perfect insanity, and her great object in life is, to cause a sensation, which she will do for a day, when plunging into her cell finally at St. Bridget's."

"What a strange governess to select for the young heiress! I thought Lady Stratharden had been a very pious Protestant?"

"So she is! as good and well-meaning a fiddle-faddle old dowager as exists, and perfectly heart-broken about Anne. My mother must have been

mistaken, for she, in a disastrous hour, recommended Miss Turton as a strict Protestant, her only fault that she was too bigotted against all papists and Popery. My mother's late brother, Lord Stratharden, was a papist, but his widow had a right, which she greatly valued, to educate her daughter in her own faith. At all hours of the day now, and sometimes only too late in the evening, my pretty cousin Anne may be seen walking alone with Father Eustace in his character of confessor, their heads down, their steps slow, their whole aspect indicating a sort of spiritual flirtation, and the only point on which Anne and her governess differ, my aunt tells me, is a bitter jealousy which has arisen between them relating to Father Eustace. As my cousin inherits all the enormous Stratharden estates, she is well worth entrapping, and no pains have been spared. It will visibly be the death of that good, religious, only-too-indulgent mother, my aunt, now quite superseded; but do what she may, the governess, the pupil, and the *soi-disant* 'Father' cannot be separated, for habit has caused Lady Anne to fall into their grasp as if she were in a man-trap. Yet we often laugh ready to die over Miss Turton's absurdities, and you may hear how Anne is now appealing to Miss Turton's opinions that she may laugh at them. The governess fancies herself a poetess, and having strung some jingling rhymes together once, Sonnets to the Moon, the

Stars, the Snow-drops, the Crystal Palace, and the London Fog, she enclosed them to 'Gordon's Magazine,' saying she was not 'a poor author in want of a dinner, but a poet inspired by sentiment and enthusiasm.' The editor wrote back, in the usual polite tone of rejection, that these were without exception the most beautiful verses he had ever read, but they did not exactly suit his pages."

"How very kind not to unmask a pleasing delusion!" said Beatrice, "I never do."

"It is most diverting to put Miss Turton into a state of beautiful confusion by catching her sometimes gazing at herself in a stream, which she thinks more poetical than a mirror, warbling an air very much out of tune, and trying to persuade herself that she is an Arcadian Shepherdess, fond of reclining on the damp grass, and picking wild flowers," continued Lord Iona. "Miss Turton said to me lately, in her usual seraphic tone of affectation, 'I never slumber when I can avoid it. I like best to be surprised by sleep, and instead of a pillow, to repose my cheek on a book of devotion.'"

"It must be very irritating if no one coincides in Miss Turton's high estimate of her own merits," said Beatrice, unable to resist an extempore fit of laughing: "Miss Turton probably lives under a continual sense of injury and of injustice from an unappreciating world."

"And it is this mass of affectations and absurdi-

ties, that after having wasted some years in spoiling the education of my cousin Anne, is going to retire within the walls of a convent as too good for the world. She means to set herself up in the character of a popish saint; as those people who are least fit for domestic and Christian duties at home, are those who become canonized at Rome."

Miss Turton at this moment turned ostentatiously round to the consequential-looking butler, and said in a whisper, very audible though she affected secrecy, "Pray inquire for me, as this is Friday, whether these whittings are fried with butter or with lard? Also, if the roast potatoes were done under the roast beef, or only under the wild duck." Seeing Lord Iona listening with assumed gravity, Miss Turton added to him, in a tone of superlative excellence, "I was quite taken in last Friday by an omelette cooked with gravy."

"Little things are great to little minds," muttered Lord Iona. "Your luncheon, Miss Turton, would not satisfy a sylph. My fasting consists in never eating more than is good for me; but pray what authority have you in Scripture for preferring fish and wild-duck to beef? May you not as well make a religion of eating rice instead of potatoes? Any one might call it a religious duty always to wear pink ribbons rather than blue, or to drink cyder rather than tea, but unless such distinctions are commanded in the Bible, they are

no part of Christianity. When you become a nun, Miss Turton, I do wonder how you will feel after the show is over, the crowd dispersed, the excitement subsided and yourself forgotten. I hear you are then to take a situation as your own housemaid, to sweep your cell and make your bed! I daresay the maids here would gladly lend you a broom, and accept your aid in what they call ‘doing out the rooms.’ Had you been an Indian widow, I should certainly have witnessed your burning in a *suttee*.”

The attention of Beatrice became at this moment caught, by observing the intense interest with which Lady Edith was listening to a dialogue between Lady Eaglescain and the Duchess of Dorchester, whose ideas at first strayed about from subject to subject, as a bird hops from twig to twig, while the particularly matter-of-fact tone of her mind, made her Grace’s conversation seem dry and tasteless as a stale biscuit. At length she said to her attentive hostess, in a tone of most benignant cordiality, and suppressing her customary yawn,

“You know, dear Lady Eaglescain, I always am so obliged for the favour of your advice; and though that curate you kindly recommended very soon left our church for Romanism, and carried over some of our most influential tenants along with him, still that was no fault of yours. By the way, do let me thank you now for this very perfect nursery governess, who has arrived to-day. So

à propos your finding her at once! She seems beyond all praise, as if made to order, and it was wonderful to find a disengaged English woman in this neighbourhood, where it could so little be hoped. The Duke says she is the most sensible woman he ever spoke to. Her conversation is one ever-flowing tide of complaisance. She agrees with him in everything, and has a horror of the Jesuits! Excuse me, but that remark—that monstrosity—slipped off my Protestant tongue by accident, and quite promiscuously.”

Beatrice felt surprised during this rambling speech from the duchess, to perceive that Lady Eaglescairn fell into a state of embarrassment which it was evident she could neither conceal nor suppress. Her Grace of Dorchester’s gratitude continued in a state of most voluble animation, which evidently increased the confusion of her greatly perplexed hostess, though Lady Eaglescairn might as easily have intercepted the Falls of Niagara in a tea-cup, as attempted to impede the flow of her grace’s animated communications.

“My eldest boy is charmed with some pretty books the new governess showed him! I had not time to do more than glance at them, but the little allegory of ‘The Golden Fountain’ is enchanting,—also ‘The Dream of Delights;’ ‘The Torn Flower’ is very touching, and likewise ‘The Guardian Spirit.’ It contains a beau-

tiful frontispiece of a child with its eyes bandaged and its hands tied behind, but carefully led up an impossible precipice by a sort of fairy with wings. I did not clearly catch the meaning, but she says these books are all excellent little Protestant stories, and so improving."

"Allow me to say, that I think the 'Goody Two Shoes,' or 'Sandford and Merton,' of our own nursery days were much safer studies for the young, and quite as true as these, which have recently led in some sad instances to very disastrous consequences," observed Lady Edith, in an under tone to the Duchess, while Lady Eaglescairn was giving some directions to the butler. "The very books your grace has named, were lent to the children of my industrial school by an English schoolmistress there last summer, who deceived me as to her real faith, and misled one of my most promising pupils."

"Not a Papist?" whispered the Duchess in a tone of unmitigated horror. "What would my duke say, if such a thing ever happened in our family! But it is impossible to deceive either him or me. We have all our eyes open! In these times it is necessary to be very circumspect. Excuse me, Lady Eaglescairn—you and I have agreed to differ and be friends. My duke always says that we Tudors are as old a Protestant family, as you De Bathes are Roman Catholic, therefore we

could never forgive ourselves if my boy,—likely to have such a stake in this country,—were in his very infancy charged to the muzzle with religious controversy. You tell me that there are the highest testimonials to Mrs. Lor ——”

“Yes! yes!” interrupted Lady Eaglescairn, hurriedly, while a deep blush overspread her countenance, and she almost buried it over a large tumbler of water. “Your governess has many,—volumes of testimonials.”——

“Particularly from your excellent friend”——

“Yes! from everybody!—from all my most esteemed correspondents,—Lady Linlithgow,—and Lady ——”

“But especially,” persisted the unstoppable duchess, who was not accustomed to follow the lead of any one; “my duke and I pin our faith implicitly on the recommendation of Mr. Clinton.”

Lady Edith exchanged a look of consternation with Beatrice, and then the dark suspicion that hovered in their minds becoming confirmed, Lady Edith anxiously fastened her penetrating eyes on Lady Eaglescairn, who seemed reading out of her plate as she bent down over it, and replied hesitatingly, “I cannot answer for Mrs. Lorraine’s morals, but her principles are excellent. I believe Mr. Clinton knows her well and esteems her much. He has great reason to do so. She had a severe struggle of mind on some religious

points which he piloted her through with most exemplary wisdom and kindness. You may rest assured she is a perfect treasure."

It now flashed into the memory of Beatrice, that as she drove through Clanmarina that morning, the little village-shop of Mrs. Lorraine was unexpectedly shut-up, and had a deserted uninhabited aspect; therefore this highly extolled Protestant governess, with a bushel of testimonials, was evidently no other than Mrs. Lorraine, a suspicion which became confirmed by the final words of the poor misguided duchess.

"Well! it is such a comfort to have Mr. Clinton's warrant, for really I do not fully understand everything on these subjects, and might have been deceived. Your *protégée* tells me she is in mourning for several near relations, therefore begs to live quite secluded during some weeks, that she may give attention night and day to my boy till this party disperses. The doctors have forbid her to eat any animal food. In fact she seems willing to live on a crust, and to sleep on the floor. I never saw any one more accommodating, and so humble that she never lifts her eyes from the ground."

"That is what Jesuits call 'the custody of the eyes,'" observed Lady Edith, quietly. "I never yet found any one to be trusted who could not look me in the face, eye to eye, as well as mind to mind."

"But," whispered the duchess, earnestly, "Pray tell me, Lady Edith, do you think Mrs. Lorraine capable of assuming two characters?"

"Not only two, but twenty," replied Lady Edith. "You would very much underrate Mrs. Lorraine's powers as an actress, by supposing her limited to so small a range of parts. Mrs. Lorraine belongs to that fearful religion which gives a licence to tell any lie, if it be for the good of yourself or others, and you may read now in the life of a certain favourite Papist, Saint Alphonso Liguori, this very un-English and un-Christian opinion. 'For a just cause, it is lawful to confirm equivocation with an oath.' Think, then, what hope there is that Mrs. Lorraine will ever betray her own secret to you, or declare truly who and what she is."

"But," said the duchess, incredulously, "you do not seriously believe that anything calling itself a religion can teach immorality."

"As to that, Lady Eaglescairn herself says she cannot answer for Mrs. Lorraine's morals, but that her principles are excellent. Read the lives of the five saints of 1829, and you will find that they had no morals. According to the creed of that sect, a son may rejoice at his father being murdered, if thereby good accrues from it to the Church; and when a servant thinks himself underpaid in respect to wages, he may help himself to the difference. If

Mrs. Lorraine thinks her services to you worth 100*l.* per annum, and you give her only 50*l.*, she is sole judge of her own merits, and may rob you of the balance in any way most convenient. Do not be deterred, by the almost romantic villany of these doctrines, from believing that they are taught now by the Jesuits in England, for I have collected chapter and verse from their own writings, more than I dare repeat. Any day your grace may see my little volume, and then ‘by their works ye shall know them.’ Some of their books are a perfect Paganism of corruption, frightful to those who examine, and incredible to those who do not.”

While this conversation was going on, two gentlemen, who seemed quite at home in the house, though they had arrived only an hour before, were seated together in the embrasure of a distant window, carrying on a low earnest conversation, evidently forgetful that any human being was in the room but themselves. The clear hard voice of the elder, all power and no expression, sounded in an almost continual flood of energetic discourse. It was but seldom interrupted, and only for a short moment, by the very harmonious and beautiful tone of his young companion, who seemed listening to the other with reverential awe. At length they both rose, while the young man, with evident feebleness of health and strength, languidly strolled

towards the luncheon table. A mass of night-black hair overshadowed a thin emaciated countenance, so perfectly colourless to the very lips, that it seemed like a beautiful mask of alabaster, and he never raised his eyes till the last remark of Lady Edith reached his ear. He suddenly, then, looked up with a start of astonishment, the colour rushed in a flood of scarlet to his very forehead, his eyes became lighted up with an expression of rapture, and rushing with hurried steps to where she sat, he almost frantically clasped the hands of Lady Edith in his own, and staggering into a chair fainted away.

“Allan! dear Allan!” exclaimed Lady Edith in accents of inexpressible grief, as she gazed with all the sorrow that a mother could have felt at the lifeless wreck before her: “Can this be Allan? Oh! how changed!”

Beatrice had stood up with all the other guests in consternation and confusion, while her spirit at once discerned who was the heart-broken and wasted being, a momentary glimpse of whom had already excited her sympathising pity. This then was her long-desired meeting with the associate of her childhood,—loved as a brother, prayed for since his boyhood, and now probably lost to her companionship for ever. Tears coursed each other irresistibly down her cheek, pale with grief and agitation, as she tried to conquer, or at least to

conceal her agitation ; but there was one eye fixed upon her with searching interest, not to be avoided, and that was the eye of her new friend, Lord Iona, who contrived with apparent carelessness to screen her from observation. She felt the delicacy of his considerate attention in that trying moment, and with a grateful glance more than rewarded him.

Mr. Ambrose now advanced, and stood beside his insensible pupil and nephew. His countenance was perfectly placid and immoveable, without one such momentary indication of human feeling as any mortal face might naturally have now displayed, but assuming an indisputable right to act for Sir Allan, he tacitly excluded the attentions of the other guests, and only noticed the presence of Lady Edith, by taking from her hand a glass of wine she had poured out for Allan, saying, " Pardon me, Madam ! My nephew fasts all this week !"

" What !" asked Lady Edith, " neither wine nor cordials, if he were to die for want of them ?"

" Let me entreat," answered Mr. Ambrose, " that as Allan's nerves are exceedingly weak, you will not appear when he recovers. This unlucky necessity for our returning here has quite upset him. Allan was most unaccountably low during our whole journey from Rome, and must remain

some days secluded in his own private room now, to recruit."

"No wonder he needs it," whispered Lord Iona to Beatrice, in his wisest tone; "I am singular enough to know that I am myself mortal, but well do I guess the sort of thing M^cAlpine goes through, from my own experience. I nearly sunk under it myself; but Father Eustace, then my confessor, was proud of my 'frost-bit feet and dirty serge,' crusts of bread for a fortnight, and midnight vigils. As a boy I used to pick up the crumbs thrown out to the sparrows, and often slept standing or walking. M^cAlpine is hardly ever now quite awake, for sleep steals over him against his will, or without his knowledge, but one cannot trick him into unconsciously eating."

Beatrice soon after found Lady Edith in the quiet sanctuary of her own room, where prostrate on her knees she wept such tears of anguish, as only strong minds can ever shed. She now believed that Allan loved her as before, loved his uncle's memory, and preserved all the kind affections of his boyhood; but she saw how boundless was the authoritative influence of Mr. Ambrose; how deeply Allan's faith had been tampered with, and how small her own hopes could be of gaining access to the dear object of her early instructions and subsequent prayers.

Sir Allan and Mr. Ambrose appeared no more

that day, and nothing could be more strange to Lady Edith, with her retired habits, than to find herself in so very gay a circle and so obviously an unwelcome guest, though she now felt more than at first, that being invited, duty and affection bound her to remain so long as Beatrice did, if not also for the sake of Allan, so dear to her memory, but whose name now was never heard.

Lady Edith cared so little for mere material luxuries, that if any one had given her a present of the Crystal Palace for her own private drawing-room, it would have seemed empty, without friendly affections: but in the scene of her present magnificent residence, Lady Eaglescairn never voluntarily addressed a word to her. Lady Edith felt worse off than the chairs and tables, which had a recognised place of their own; even the poodle-dog was cordially welcomed, but her presence seemed evidently an incumbrance, only endured to secure Beatrice, and her sensations, surrounded by so many adverse eyes, were somewhat like those of a stag at bay.

In the whirlpool of small talk around, Lady Edith, though extinguished herself, derived much amusement from listening with intelligent curiosity to the best talkers near, and especially the Lord Iona, laughing and chatting with Beatrice, who never left the side of her benefactress, but always

hovered near, all dimples and smiles, the admired of many admirers, while inexpressibly amused and surprised at the audacity of Lord Iona's wit, when once fairly started in a favourite vein of nonsense.

"I have a magical ring here, Miss Farinelli, which tells me," he said slily, "all that everybody thinks of myself, and I am consulting it at this moment as to your opinion."

"What a mortifying answer it will give!" replied Beatrice, laughing. "No wonder you learn diffidence."

"There now you are immensely mistaken! I might safely agree, like the Sultana of the Arabian Nights, to lose my own head as soon as I cease to please, and," added he, bowing, "to be pleased."

"You seem very easily pleased with yourself and others," replied Beatrice jestingly; "I carry a thermometer to tell me what I ought to think of myself, and it never rises above zero."

Lady Anne Darlington, at once on the shortest notice, began a vehement, undying, boarding-school friendship for Beatrice, on the most romantic model. They had already exchanged bouquets, and would probably soon be at the pitch of exchanging locks of hair, but meanwhile she astonished Beatrice by her very decided manner, her irrepressible ardour in the pursuit of amusement, her frolicsome vivacity, and her indefatigable flow of spirits. "I am so glad," she said next evening,

“to find a person, place, or thing as young as myself in this old house !”

“It is a complete melo-drama, I suppose, with a ghost, an eastern turret, and a trap-stair,” replied Beatrice, smiling. “Very grand and very gloomy.”

“Come, you seem both gentle and mirthful,” said Lady Anne ; “let us be inseparable friends.”

As the two young girls sat side by side, they grouped in beautiful contrast together on the sofa before Lady Edith, with Lord Iona entertaining the trio in his best style of nonsense on his favourite subject, Lady Anne’s pet governess.

“Miss Turton is perfect in the art of looking religious. Her attitudes in the drawing-room always seem as if she were sitting for the picture of a saint. There, Anne ! look now ! your invaluable governess has her clasped hands resting on her lap, and her eyes slightly turned up in a state of transcendental enthusiasm ! Yet bring her back to common life, and no one is such a manufacturer of petty grievances, so given to take offence, and to imagine imaginary slights, as well as imaginary conquests. My whole life is one unsuccessful effort to prevent her being either in love with me or hating me.”

“Poor soul !” said Lady Anne, bursting into a juvenile peal of laughter. “She has had three disappointments this year—all excellent speculations too !”

“Speculations!” asked Lord Iona, looking full of laughing intelligence. “What, in the railways?!”

“Pshaw, George! you know very well, the old story!” said Lady Anne, in a most fascinating half-petulant tone of humour. “She was always as romantic, you know, as any abigail on the stage. Miss Turton told me sentimentally yesterday, looking *à la* Siddons, and expanding her chest like an air cushion, with sighs, that her affections have been blighted!”

“Nonsense! all our affections have been blighted! everybody’s are: your’s are, mine are, Miss Farinelli’s are! If everybody retires into a living grave who fancies their affections blighted, we shall have nobody left. We must all turn our hearts into stone, and it is very easily done. So she talks such rubbish still, and sets up for being in that most interesting position, superlatively miserable! In the many centuries during which people have been falling in love, five-fourths of mankind have been the same as Miss Turton—

‘Crazed with care, and cross’d with hopeless love.’

I well remember last June, when Miss Turton intended in the first place to marry a Welsh curate, and in the second place failing him, a free church clergyman, both excellent men, but poorer than church mice, as neither had a church.”

“Poor Miss Turton!” exclaimed Lady Anne, laughing; “her flirtations are all like an ill-made squib with no little pop at the end.”

“Then she thought herself engaged to Mr. Fitzgerald,” continued Lord Iona, becoming more and more enlivened. “He held the Episcopal Chapel at Inverness, and turned out to have been, from the first, a Jesuit Priest performing Protestant services by special dispensation from his superior. That is quite a common manœuvre now, against the Episcopal Church: and Mr. Fitzgerald, as a blind to conceal his being a Popish Priest, pretended he was engaged to poor deluded Miss Turton. The Duke of Dorchester blew up the mine by recognising Mr. Fitzgerald as Father Dominick, from the College of the Sacred Heart, at Naples.”

“That was Priest-craft and Jesuit-craft indeed!” exclaimed Beatrice with irrepressible indignation. “If the Saints of Rome be such men, what must the sinners be!”

“But Miss Turton, being thrown out of all other situations, is now finally devoted to celibacy and Father Eustace!” added Lord Iona, watching the effect of what he said on Lady Anne, who coloured slightly and looked down. “When your confessor enters the room it becomes evident that the whole heart and soul of Miss Turton are engrossed with almost adoring interest, in catching his every word and action! In her estimation he is

evidently a perfect demi-god, and as those whose feelings are most excitable on some points are naturally most excitable on all, your worthy governess has given up all her 'speculations,' for the one absorbing object of pleasing Father Eustace. Look now at her St. Agnes expression in gazing with adoration at this picture of St. Anthony, by Teniers ! What an extravagant ostentation of reverential gestures she is making ! ”

“ What a tongue you have ! ” said Lady Anne, unable to resist the influence of her cousin’s lively humour, and recovering her usual careless grace of manner. “ I wonder in the convent how she will manage a long broom ! ”

“ If she merely shut a door it was in an attitude fit to play the harp in, with simpering face and downcast eyes ; but I have a vision before me now, of poor dear Miss Turton, next week virtuously walking to her convent chapel over the snow, without shoes or stockings, and living in a trance without food, till she becomes so spiritualized, that she is visibly suspended a little way up in the air, telling her beads at about a yard from the ground. She might as well attempt climbing to heaven on a rope of sand as to ascend by all her own absurd affectations.

“ Ah, Miss Turton ! ” said he, looking as amusingly malicious as a young kitten. “ We were just talking of you ! It quite spoils you being in such rude health now, for there is nothing I admire so

much as a graceful invalid ; and it is a sad blunder to wear coloured flowers in your bouquet—they are reckoned quite vulgar now. They should all be pure white. I could not have supposed you making such a mistake.”

“No one has a more off-hand way of saying unpleasant truths—if they are truths—than you, my Lord!” replied Miss Turton with a stage laugh, but looking excessively angry ; while trying not to seem ashamed of her brilliant bouquet. “But I shall be very soon beyond the reach of every earthly annoyance.”

“Well, Miss Turton, take the advice of an old —— enemy. Be a ballad-singer in the streets rather than put your head into that conventual noose from which there is no deliverance but death. You might remain the most single of all single ladies without any irrevocable vow. I shall place some value on my own good sense if it preserve you from that bourne whence no proselyte returns. I, George Lord Iona, should be appointed adviser-general to all the mothers and daughters in England. What dreadfully good reason can there be for your forsaking us all ? I feel really ill-used at your leaving the world to darkness, and to me. There are one or two things in this world that I cannot obtain any more than yourself ; but why on that account give up all, and retire in a pet ?”

Miss Turton bestowed her favourite smile on

Lord Iona, and looked charmingly confused, for she really fancied that the young heir of Eagles-cairn united with all mankind in admiring her. Even the transparency of his ridicule had failed entirely to enlighten her, as to his satirical contempt, and starting up soon after, she made her exit from the room with simpering affectation, tripping across the floor in a style which eclipsed all her previous performances, and might have petrified Cerito or Carlotta Grisi, while Lord Iona with a most unamiable cough and satirical smile, directed Lady Anne's eyes to watch Miss Turton, looking more fit for a lunatic asylum than for a religious institution. "How well she would do in a tableau! Could we not get up a few scenes? I am excellent in charades! I may announce myself as an actor who never could obtain an engagement in any theatre—who has been hissed off the stage by an envious world every time I attempted to appear, who is warranted always to forget his part, who though unable to get up a good prologue, can contrive to give a bad epilogue, and could finish with a tremendous explosion on the flute."

"You, George, who are as Byron said of such another rattle-pated mortal, "an ignorant, noteless, timeless, tuneless, fellow!" We could not trust you to be candle-snuffer, or you would snuff all the candles out!"

"What envy and detraction, cousin Anne! but

those like me who stand upon a pedestal must expect to have stones thrown at them ! *A propos* of throwing stones : Father Eustace has been acting the political firebrand at Clanmarina, and worked up the Papists there into such a ferment of superstitious terror and excitement that our election will be riotous as an Irish fair. There are not stones enough on the road for the Protestant windows, and Father Eustace yesterday denounced Lady Edith from the pulpit."

Mr. Clinton had arrived before dinner, but he kept obviously aloof from that part of the room where Lady Edith sat, and seemed desirous to appear perfectly unconscious of her presence, while deeply engaged in conversation with Father Eustace. That wily priest, who knew his time for all things, and could be a perfect Proteus, stern or submissive on the shortest notice—firm as a rock, or pliant as a willow—felt, or rather feigned such an interest in Mr. Clinton's opinions, looking into his spectacles with such an air of profound reverence, that the two remained in apparently endless discussions together, during which the cunning Father allowed Mr. Clinton, like an unpractised gamester, to gain every point at first in order to his losing all at last.

"Father Eustace is a man of supernatural intellect, yet he quite looks up to my husband for his extraordinary acquirements ;" whispered Mrs.

Clinton, in a comfortable self-satisfied tone, while Lady Edith fixed her deep-set eyes anxiously and kindly upon her. "You need not look alarmed, Lady Edith! It is the wildest notion that there can be any danger from that agreeable Jesuit. (will you kindly pull my collar straight?) His arguments have not a feather's weight with either my husband or me!—(a little more to the left, if you please.) He has distinctly explained to me six times over the doctrine of Papal infallibility, without my ever understanding it one atom more clearly, or being in any danger of adopting it."

"Mr. Clinton has surely altered his style of dress lately, and there is a sort of stern solemnity in his manner quite strange to me; I cannot like the new cut of his coat or of his countenance," observed Lady Edith, quietly. "He was always abstemious, as all Christians ought to be; but how very rigidly he fasts now. Mrs. Clinton, let my aged experience lift up its voice to you, even though you should consider me speaking mere old-womanisms. Before it be too late, let me implore you, as I do with tears, to discourage that intimacy."

"You are become quite an alarmist," said Mrs. Clinton, with a victorious air, "but never fear for my husband! He is really bringing over Father Eustace. What a lovely satin that gown of Lady Eaglescairn's is! Do you remember the unac-

countable antipathy my husband and Father Eustace used to show against each other in society ? That sort of thing may be observed sometimes between two persons, who have nevertheless no acknowledged quarrel. They differed on every subject, misrepresented each other's opinions, misquoted each other's remarks, started an opposition dialogue with any one whom they could detach from listening to their adversary, and would not, I verily believe, have partaken of the same dish at table. How very different it is now ! " said Mrs. Clinton, with an approving glance at her husband, whose appearance was as great a contrast as his nature to Father Eustace. Mr. Clinton's fair Saxon countenance, with clear, prominent, light eyes, wanted steadfastness of expression, while his quick, frank, voluble manner was strangely contrasted by the taciturn contemplative tone of the priest, so well adapted to the grave energy expressed in his dark, handsome, but very sensual-looking physiognomy. "Father Eustace has become such a friend to my husband !"

"Or rather such a flatterer !" observed Lady Edith, glancing at his look of profound respect for what Mr. Clinton was saying ; "I scarcely recognise your husband now in the sort of mediæval and architectural *dilettante* he has lately become, and in the kind of pre-Raphael-ite costume he now adopts."

“ Yes ! everything is changed except his spectacles,” whispered Lord Iona to Beatrice. “ He is always looking through them like the windows of an old post-chaise ! I wonder if Mr. Clinton will be buried in spectacles ! ”

Every one in speaking to Lady Anne Darlington, or in talking of her, used some *nomme de caresse*, for she was the very idol of society. She was “ Bijou ” to her intimate friends, “ Anne ” to her mother, and “ St. Cecilia ” to Lord Iona. It seemed to Beatrice’s fascinated partiality, that no eye should look at any one else when her new friend appeared, yet Lady Anne was not regularly beautiful, though beauty might hide its diminished head before the charm of her presence. Lady Anne’s dress had almost a conventual character in its extreme simplicity, being of rich black velvet in the evening, and of black cloth in the morning, worn on both occasions up to the throat and down to the wrists, with white linen collar and cuffs. Her fair brown tresses were braided tightly round her small Grecian head, and her complexion was so dazzlingly white, without a tinge of colour on lip or cheek, that she looked to Beatrice like a beautiful corpse, or the ghost that might haunt an old abbey of some murdered nun. There was in all Lady Anne’s movements a singular grace ; her manner was natural as the wild-bird in a hedge ; she had a spirit of enjoyment, where others would have

found only weariness; her laugh was soft and musical; her clear ringing lark-like voice had an enchantment in every tone,—but who shall describe her singing? It was such music as Beatrice had read of, or heard of, but it had an intensity of expression that she never could have conceived. She was entranced and amazed by the noble stream of harmony which swelled and sunk upon her ear each time Lady Anne performed. While every sense this evening appeared wrapped in ecstasy, a low voice whispered close to her,—it was the voice of Lord Iona speaking to Lady Anne, in a tone of comic ecstasy, “There is not a finch in the grove whose notes you cannot imitate; a dying swan is nothing to you, Anne. You must feel here like a stray canary-bird among ordinary vulgar sparrows. What a pity that Sir Allan has not come down yet, to throw in his note and to enjoy yours as he used to do.”

The faintest tinge of pink stole into the cream-coloured cheek of the fair “Bijou,” who glanced uneasily towards Beatrice, and then bent her head over some sheets of music, and began warbling with most intense expression of unaffected feeling, a simple but very mournful hymn, while Father Eustace turned over the leaves and accompanied her. Beatrice, radiant with delighted admiration, glanced round the circle to share the pleasure of every listener, when her eye was caught by one countenance that startled and shocked

her. Never in all her short experience of life had Beatrice seen on any face before an expression of such intense and helpless grief, as on the venerable countenance of Lady Stratharden, as she gazed from an obscure corner of the room at her daughter and Father Eustace. Lady Stratharden's look was one of dignified sorrow, but so entirely heart-broken, that words would be inadequate to express any part of her grief. Large tears rolled slowly, heavily, and unheeded down her pale wasted cheek, and once a low sob that would not be suppressed, became sadly audible, as if wrung from her very heart, while unheeded tears gushed afresh from her aged eyes.

Nothing excites so much painful sympathy as the silence of intense grief, and Beatrice could not refrain from a stolen glance occasionally towards the afflicted mother, till at length when Father Eustace and Lady Anne commenced a hymn to the Virgin, Lady Stratharden, unable evidently to remain passive in the room, attempted to rise. Again and again she made an effort in vain, for she sunk feebly back on the sofa, pale with agitation, which seemed every moment to increase. All were pre-occupied with the music, and none observed the grief-stricken mother but Beatrice, who quietly made a pretext of looking at some flowers for strolling towards that obscure corner where Lady Stratharden was seated, who instantly made her a

sign for help, and in another minute they were arm in arm together, proceeding slowly to Lady Stratharden's dressing-room. There, in a voice broken and low, the agitated mother tried to thank Beatrice for her timely aid, but her voice failed, and she threw herself on the sofa in an agony of convulsive grief, which had no utterance but sobs of bitter anguish. A stranger now did the offices of kindness which a daughter should have done, but sympathy was for ever at an end between the mother and child. The image rose before Lady Stratharden's mind at this moment of long vanished hours, of her once affectionate child free and joyous as in other days, of all the happy years they had spent together, of all the joy with which she had looked forward to living out her remaining life in the sunshine of that daughter's dutiful attachment. Lady Stratharden now saw herself surrounded only by the wreck of all those fair hopes which a mother's heart had so justly cherished for Lady Anne's happiness, while the warm maternal heart that had lived but to pray for that child, was now breaking with the consciousness that for ever and ever their hopes and affections were divided.

"Miss Farinelli," said Lady Stratharden, speaking with difficulty, "I find you can feel for me, and understand all my grief. Let your own heart be its best reward. It relieves me now to speak

of one who used to be for ever beside me, and in every hope or feeling the same as myself. Oh! think of the change. By opposing what Father Eustace calls 'the vocation of my child for a convent,' I have incurred a curse expressed in his most fearful language. It does not of course weigh a feather with me, but it grieves my poor girl, still struggling with the old affection of her heart for the mother who loves her only too well. Anne has been in tears to-day, imploring me to let her have the anathema removed. Well may that fearful superstition be abhorred by God and man which speaks thus to a mother for trying to protect her own young daughter from imprisonment for life and from worse. Well may we say like David, 'Let me fall into the hands of God rather than of man.' The Popish Church has quite a genius for cursing, and here are the words written by Father Eustace in the name of his superstition to me; but they have no more influence than these hail-stones rattling on the window-pane."

Beatrice took the letter and read with indignant disgust this appalling language, used on the pretext of a religion which was about to break up the most sacred tie in nature by taking a daughter from her only parent, from a mother, who for resisting this tyrannical command, was thus anathematised in the ordinary forms used for such

occasions :—" Cursed may she be in her home, and out of her home ; may she be cursed in the city and in the field, cursed in watching and cursed in sleeping, cursed in eating and drinking, cursed in walking and sitting ; may her flesh and her bones be cursed, and from the sole of her foot to the crown of her head may she enjoy no health. May her name be erased from the book of the living, and not be recorded with the righteous!"

There was a very solemn silence in the room for several minutes, while Lady Stratharden, pale as a sheet, rivetted her hands together and was evidently engaged in fervent prayer ; but at length she said in accents of subdued feeling, "Who that ever had a Bible, could recognise in these words, the still small voice of peace on earth and goodwill to man !"

"Surely the fierce un-Christian conduct of Father Eustace will startle your daughter's mind, and awaken her to a sense of duty and affection," said Beatrice earnestly. "She cannot have extinguished every remembrance of the past, every consciousness of her divinely appointed duty to you !"

"She seems in a magnetic dream now, quite incapable of any rational thought," observed Lady Stratharden meditatively, while grasping the arms of her chair, and breathing convulsively as if every respiration were a sob. "Till very recently I

hoped that she and her cousin Iona might have made each other happy ; but since my daughter has been so constantly practising sacred music with Father Eustace and Sir Allan, a young enthusiast like herself, she never seems to remember her cousin, and he thinks as little about her. The young Baronet, I am told, has some entanglement in this country. I never could hear exactly who the lady is, but no matter now. My daughter and he have a mere musical intimacy, and if she had married any one it would probably have been her cousin. Now all her bright prospects are soon to be exchanged for a flock-bed, a hair shift, an open coffin, and an entire subjection of mind to some fellow-sinner, who calls himself her confessor."

"We may still hope and still pray, Lady Stratharden, while the irrevocable step is not finally taken," said Beatrice in a tone of the kindest earnestness. "And may not something also still be done by the exertions of a once-loved mother, who deserves all her affection and respect?"

"The grave will soon be my place of rest, for I could not survive the degradation of my child. I feel that now a broken heart may be a very certain death," said Lady Stratharden, mournfully covering her face with her hands. "The stranded wreck will soon fall to pieces ; but till my Anne is finally lost, some hope shall survive. One object for which to cherish my frail body, that it may

yet continue a clog to my soul, is the fondly cherished trust that she may yet be reclaimed."

"Hope and pray," replied Beatrice in a low earnest voice. "Though the influence of Father Eustace over all in this house seems without limit and without end, yet there is no extremity of human anguish on this side of eternity that should not send us the more earnestly and even hopefully to a listening God. What sorrow would so readily find His sympathy as that of a mother for her only child!"

"Such a daughter as yourself, Anne might have been to me, had not my own cousin and old friend Lady Eaglescairn betrayed me by recommending Miss Turton," said Lady Stratharden clasping the hand of Beatrice, while her grief broke out anew. "I once had a prejudice against any mere honest English boarding-school for my precious Anne, fearing contamination from the indiscriminate companionship of other girls, but at the very worst boarding-school in Britain, no man is left alone for hours with a young pupil, secretly to suggest any ideas of sin or impropriety he pleases. Father Eustace hears Anne's thoughts more confidentially than she ever entrusted them to me. Dreadful! how dreadful none but her own mother can tell. I lately read over Anne's book of confession, and now I know the worst. The day she degrades herself to be a nun, she might as well drive over my body at once, for

I could not survive the consciousness of her ruin. Miss Farinelli, every hour of your life thank God that you are a Protestant, that you belong to a faith which does not abhor every human affection and annihilate every relative duty."

As Beatrice was about slowly to leave the room, an idea which had been banished before recurred again to her mind, that possibly there might be more sense than nonsense in Lord Iona's gay rattling supposition, that some small spark of preference had arisen between Lady Anne and Sir Allan, which it were in the nature of things might be fanned into brighter existence, and as the generous mind of Beatrice meditated upon this one remaining hope, not a thought occurred to herself that the total extinction of Allan's early attachment should be a subject of regret. Conscious of her unknown origin, Beatrice carried the remembrance about with her so incessantly, that she never had allowed any romantic thoughts or feelings to associate themselves hopefully with herself and Allan; therefore if a thought arose to her mind that she was destined to be for ever alone in the world as to its tenderest attachments, still she fixed her grateful eye on the benign countenance of her venerated benefactress, and felt that such love as hers was all she must ever seek, and more than she could ever deserve. The meditations of Beatrice were interrupted by suddenly observing that the dark sinister eyes of

Father Eustace were fixed upon her with a gaze of fierce and eager scrutiny, most startling and unaccountable, but the next moment he gathered up his features into a look totally destitute of expression, and his eyes remained immoveably cast down during the whole remaining night.

“Her spirit seem’d as seated on a throne,
Apart from the surrounding world, and strong
In its own strength;—most strange in one so young.”

BYRON.

“If you please, Madam,” said M^cRonald that evening, after receiving some orders from Lady Edith, “I cannot understand why wax-lights were burned in our Chapel yesterday, while the sun dazzled my eyes. I like no changes,” added the old man, ominously shaking his white head. “It always alarms me, if I am made to stand when I used to kneel in our service, or to kneel when I used to stand. Mr. Clinton is altogether getting very long in the candle now.”

“The custom of lighting candles in the day-time,” replied Lady Edith, “was begun when Christians had no church but the dark catacombs at Rome, where daylight never penetrated; but you are right, M^cRonald, to be watchful against one step in advance to Romanism. A seeming trifle, like a flag on the main-mast, often intimates a great deal.”

CHAPTER VIII.

“Here easy quiet, a secure retreat,
A harmless life that knows not how to cheat;
With home-bread plenty, the wise owners bless,—
And rural pleasures crown their happiness.”

DRYDEN.

LADY EDITH had retired late, and “uneasy lay her head,” though she did not “wear a crown.” With restless grief and anxiety she thought of Allan, and even the greatness of her sorrow on his account did not so engross her, but she had still some solicitude to spare for Mr. Clinton, some sympathy for Lady Stratharden, and much pity for poor lost Bessie M^c Ronald. Thus, like a tree cut down to the very ground, Lady Edith’s own life was prostrated to the earth, yet in the hopes and prospects of others she found sources of interest such as her own could never more supply.

Towards morning, Lady Edith, hearing the deep-toned sound of a bell, rose to look out of the window, where she found a soothing pleasure for some time in observing many a light cloud careering swiftly across the hemisphere, which veiled from time to time the calm effulgence of the crescent moon and of the silent stars. How beautiful, in

every aspect, are the varying pictures of cloud and sky! Masses of snow had fallen during the night, and were hanging on every branch of the old oak avenue, stretching nearly a mile long, and ending in a perspective like the roof and window of some vast cathedral. Every trunk and branch was white as marble, and every leaf on the evergreens beneath seemed as if carved in ivory. A few snow-flakes, like fairy-gems, sparkled as they fell, and the hoar-frost lay like a sheet of frosted silver over the extensive park and distant hills. The beautiful chapel was hung with long icicles, which glittered like drawn swords hanging from the roof, and also fringing the porch, under the shadow of which they were but dimly seen.

“ All was so calm, so still in earth and air,
You scarce would start to meet a spirit there.
The vault is blue,
Without a cloud, and white without a speck,
The dazzling splendour of the scene below.”

As Lady Edith stood admiring this glorious landscape, clearly shown by the silver lamp of night, suddenly the whole building, as if by magic, became lighted up inside, the fine gothic arches were brilliantly illuminated from the interior, and the reflection of the stained glass windows lay stretched, like a many-coloured rainbow, on the snow beneath.

Lady Edith would have felt recompensed for the loss of a month's sleep, by witnessing the

solemn glory of such a scene, where a million of stars above, and the ancient church beneath, filled her mind with thoughts of time stretching on to eternity. As she stood impressively but pleasingly meditating on that Divine Creator who had called herself and all these glorious objects into being, the loud sonorous bell suddenly tolled again for the service, and there issued forth from the Castle a procession of figures advancing in the dim moonlight and along the untrodden snow towards the chapel. In the female group which advanced first, Lady Edith at once recognised the light and graceful form of Lady Anne, leaning on Miss Turton. Keeping at a respectful distance, Bessie followed, escorted by Father Eustace, who seemed talking very earnestly to her. Behind these, to the grief and consternation of Lady Edith, she unmistakeably recognised in this Popish troop Mr. Clinton, walking slowly beside the tall, robust, and stately Mr. Ambrose, who supported on his other side the slight, stooping, feeble form of Sir Allan M^c Alpine, advancing with painful effort over the untrodden snow; and as he once looked back, for a moment, towards the Castle, his face, pale and spectral in the moonlight, looked to Lady Edith like the face of a spirit. Had she seen him stretched on his death-bed, the grief could not have been more profound of Lady Edith, the truest friend he had upon earth, at seeing the

young Chief thus enlisted by craft and cunning into a state of slavery, endless as time, and boundless as human nature.

At breakfast Sir Allan did not appear, and Mr. Ambrose, smiling magnificently to the assembled party, made his nephew's perfectly authentic apology, "Quite knocked up with his journey!"

"Or rather with his midnight pilgrimage in the snow," whispered Lord Iona to Beatrice. "The less fit his health is for such efforts, the more meritorious do his spiritual advisers consider it that he should perpetrate a gradual suicide, by obeying all their supernatural requirements. Father Eustace says that those in earnest about another life must not expect to remain long in this world. The priest will take care, however, that Sir Allan lives till after his next birthday, when he comes of age, and signs away his whole property."

"Is it true that he is to take the vow of poverty, and that in Sir Allan's deed of resignation he must not omit so much as a nail or a piece of twine, if he has any such trifles, besides his plate, jewels, books, and estates?" asked Beatrice, in a tone of almost desponding grief. "Poor Clanmarina! and all its honest, worthy, Protestant tenants!"

"Yes; Sir Allan on his next birthday commits a moral suicide, and gives all over to Popish despotism. Till then, Mr. Ambrose is a police-spy, to watch that Sir Allan's very thoughts shall have

no liberty. It is a most detestable espionage, and a most annihilating religion," said Lord Iona, in a tone of the fiercest contempt. "Mr. Ambrose commits a moral murder on his own nephew, but no extreme of human falsehood or cruelty is too great to be incurred for the sake of his order. How all my old chivalric ancestors must blush in their picture-frames, to see my father and mother lending themselves to such a conspiracy against our young unsophisticated neighbour, the descendant of so many Protestant ancestors! Romanism is a perpetual nightmare to all its votaries."

Beatrice looked with surprise at her companion, talking in a manner so earnest and so different from the audacious nonsense of his ordinary style, and she said in her usual frank animated tone, "How strange that when Allan is caught by those ensnaring priests you should have escaped their fangs! I observe you and Father Eustace never now even speak to each other!"

"No! never since that boating day, which you will remember as I do! Father Eustace has some strange mysterious hold over my father and mother, who dare not believe that story, or anything he chooses they shall not believe. He hates me as an apostate, and I never voluntarily associate with those who are ashamed of me, or," added Lord Iona with stern emphasis,—“of whom I am ashamed! There is in my mind a great reservoir of virtuous

indignation, and when I see the inexorable self-sufficiency of that priest who holds his unaccountable but iron rule over my father and his whole household, nothing but my hope of in some measure counteracting him prevents me from leaving home in a whirlwind of rage, or in a state of sterile despair."

Beatrice felt her colour rise, and her bright eyes sparkled with new animation as she listened in astonishment to the gradual development of Lord Iona's mind and feelings. There was eloquence in the tone of his voice, the eloquence of genuine emotion as he proceeded in a manner between jest and earnest, which became irresistibly attractive.

"You thought because I have lived so long abroad in the very heart of tittle-tattle and frivolity, that I had learned no respect for the empire of mind and intellect; that in short I know rather less than the man in the moon, on any subject except horses and dogs; but though every device was used from my boyhood to keep me idle, thoughtless, and good-for-nothing, that I might suit the purposes of Father Eustace, still I had an obstinate curiosity to learn something, and an obstinate hatred to the blind and brutal obedience exacted of me. At our Jesuit college I saw young men obliged to undergo school-boy punishments, either flogging themselves, or obliged to stand publicly in their clerical costume, with a placard on their breasts, stating in large characters that

they had been 'disobedient,' or self-indulgent. I had to bow at the name of Ignatius Loyola also, as you do at the name of Jesus, and by crafty promises, or still craftier threats, all the little income I then possessed became confiscated to the ever-open purse of Jesuitism. If poor M^cAlpine had lost his fortune at billiards he might find another perhaps some day bequeathed to him; but if he lose it at the game of Jesuitism he beggars and disinherits himself for ever."

"Can we do nothing that these conspirators may be yet unmasked, and the best of men saved?" exclaimed Beatrice, with a fervour that lighted up her whole countenance. "Oh! who could now recognise the bold, high-spirited, generous, and brave Allan M^cAlpine of former days? Let us try whether we could not counteract a whole legion of Father Eustaces."

"Some persons who are like me, lazy to excess in their own affairs, are very busy in other people's, and that is my case to-day. I am a man who may sometimes be taken seriously, and there is a spark of energy in me now that portends a coming conflagration. With the hope of pleasing you, and wishing to unpedestal Father Eustace in this house, I am in a state of most glorious courage. Now and then before this I have had some flashes of thought on the subject of rescuing M^cAlpine; but be cautious. Those who have a life to lose must

beware of Father Eustace, as he has the most marvellous ears! Look at him now!"

"He is at a perfectly impossible distance!"

"Not at all! As a boy I used to try experiments of muttering in the lowest tone, and in the most remote corner what he was not intended to hear; but the whole world is a whispering-gallery to Father Eustace, for nothing escapes him. His very sleep is a cat-sleep that observes every sound, and he never winks in case of losing a word."

"I am quite unconvinced," said Beatrice, archly smiling, "he is looking as lifeless as if he were in the Morgue, and certainly beyond ear-shot when we are speaking so piano, or rather pianissimo."

"Not if he has his Jesuit ears on! Beware! I see indiscretion in your face, and in the bright twinkle of your eye, but he is clearly getting into a state of clairvoyance now, and of thought-reading, so let us not venture even to think of him when he is present," said Lord Iona, in a half-stifled whisper, "his piercing and unfathomable eyes are upon you now, and if ever there was magic in any eye it is in his."

" 'Well, well—the world revolves upon its axis,
And all mankind turns with it—heads and tails;
We live and love—make war and pay our taxes,
And, as the veering wind shifts, shift our sails.' "—*Byron.*

Next morning Lady Eaglescairn summoned all the ladies round her to assist in threading millions

of scarlet berries from the hedge-rows, with which to form a gigantic red cross as an ornamental offering to the chapel. She said it was a beautiful principle, as Cardinal Paccoretti enjoined such occupations, and they were no doubt perfectly adapted to the small mind and still smaller Christianity of Lady Eaglescairn. Lady Anne and Miss Turton were both previously engaged in working each a pair of slippers for Father Eustace, with a serious device in grey and black worsted on the canvas. Beatrice, though eagerly summoned to assist her arbitrary hostess, made a hurried apology and escaped—thankful! oh! how thankful that she had not been brought up to such a mere burlesque upon religion, nor to have a craving for any visible object of worship, but humbly to offer her own spiritual homage to an invisible God. She left Lady Eaglescairn anxiously planning a procession through the passages with palm-branches, in imitation of one she had seen at Rome, and the most earnest discussion was begun with Father Eustace how to lead the line of ladies round the billiard-room, through the marble hall, and under the stained-glass windows in the passage, so as to give their dresses the most picturesque effect, and how to vanish most gracefully in the distance. The organ was to play, flags, images, and banners, were to be carried, and altogether it seemed about to turn out exceedingly like a host of idle children imitating

a temperance procession in their own school-room, or playing at soldiers; but Lady Eaglescairn was in a flutter of felicity and of self-importance, arranging the interesting details as if her life depended on the pictorial effect she should produce by the scenery, machinery, dresses and decorations of her little Popish exhibition.

Lady Edith was reading a history of the Bible aloud in her own room to Beatrice, who sat beside her finishing some frocks for the poor scholars at Clanmarina. The blazing fire cast a ruddy glow around, and the little group formed a picture of simple unexcited domestic comfort, such as the eye loves to look upon, but such as was seldom seen within the stately old towers of Eaglescairn, when a low hesitating knock at the door attracted Beatrice's attention. At her bidding it slowly opened, and Lady Edith, who loved all those she ever looked upon, saw there the face she loved the most upon earth;—but how changed! Sir Allan stood within the door, a perfect picture of youthful beauty almost on the verge of death; his large, bright, melancholy eyes fixed on Lady Edith and Beatrice, his pale lip quivering, his cheek blanched, his whole attitude indicating the very prostration of languor and grief. The scenes of his boyhood seemed again before him, as the young Chief gazed in mournful silence at their simple occupations and quiet happiness; but when his

eye fell on the large old well-worn family Bible, venerated in his own early years above all earthly objects, tears of anguish sprung into his eyes, and rolled down his pallid face. Sir Allan, after a long searching glance around, closed his eyes, making a convulsive effort to recover some composure, but in vain. A painful tremor shook his frame; he took the nearest seat, and covering his face with his hands burst into tears. Lady Edith rose, and with trembling emotion silently placed her hand on his head, as had been her custom in former days; and after a few moments, during which none could attempt to speak, she said in a tone of deep and solemn affection,—“Welcome, dearest Allan! The warmest of welcomes and the whole sympathy of my heart are yours. Dear Allan! I thank God that you are come.”

“It is like rising from the dead to be with you both again! It refreshes my heart—it soothes my wretchedness. Oh, what a trance of happiness I once lived in at home!” exclaimed Sir Allan in a tone of wringing anguish. “Dear home! It scorches my memory to think of the past—to imagine the future; but to be with you both once more—even for a short moment—it brings back verdure to my heart! Why did I ever leave you! Oh! for the affections of my free and happy boyhood again!”

Sir Allan buried his face on the sofa and wept uncontrollably, while Lady Edith silently seated herself beside him and grasped his hand with emotion not less than his own. Moments as they fled seemed only to increase Sir Allan's agitation, and though he several times looked up, intending to speak, every attempt failed, his voice forsook him, and wringing his hands with anguish, he again prostrated his face on the sofa which shook beneath him.

"Allan!" said Lady Edith, in a voice of soothing affection,—“once, in such circumstances as ours, I might have proposed that we three should unite, as in old times, to ask for consolation from our Divine Creator himself, who promises ‘while you are yet speaking, I will hear;’ but, Allan, I know all! I know that your young mind, surrounded by the cunning blandishments of experienced men, has been brought to trust in those who would crush you into nothingness. Let me only entreat then, dear Allan, that the much-loved boy who once trusted to me in every hour of youthful trouble or perplexity, will trust me still. For your own sake, for mine, and for the sake of your dear deceased uncle, now deep in his early grave, continue, Allan, as in happier days, to confide in your oldest and truest friend. I have long been done with life! That fatal day, which you and I

never can forget, ended all on earth for me : yet, Allan, I shall feel that the affections and blessings of existence are not utterly extinct, could I only serve you,—you, Allan, once so dear to Sir Evan, still so dear to myself. Come to me yet, then, as a friend, and however much we may differ in opinion, let us have no difference in affection.”

When Lady Edith mentioned the name of his lamented uncle, Sir Allan’s cheek grew, if possible, paler, his lips became compressed, and his eyes, which had been mournfully fixed upon the kind and venerable speaker, fell to the ground. A long silence followed, before he answered in a low, subdued, and meditative accent, “ It is long—long since I have heard the voice of natural feeling. Oh ! the balm that it is to my heart, once more to hear that familiar tone of kindness ! Yet it breaks my heart ! Beatrice ! pity your old companion, and be thankful to have lived in the calm sunshine of such a home. Yet no ! ” added he, starting suddenly up and walking with rapid, agitated steps up and down the room : “ Am I wrong to say so ? am I wrong to think so ? Alas ! what am I to think and believe ? ” added he, mournfully contemplating one of his thin, emaciated, almost transparent hands. “ Till we met yesterday, I scarcely realized how altered I am,—altered ! yes !

in mind as much as in body ! Beatrice, you would not have known me again !”

“ Allan ! you are changed indeed, but no change could have so altered you that my sisterly affection could have been deceived,” replied Beatrice, her pulse fluttering with a thousand conflicting emotions. “ If your hair were white as snow, if your figure were bent to the ground, could I forget the companion of all my happy days ? ”

“ But you did forget me, Beatrice ! ” said Sir Allan, in a low voice of mournful reproach. “ Yes ! before I allowed the link to be cut that bound my heart in the dearest of bonds to yours, they had told all—”

“ Told you what, Allan ? ” exclaimed Beatrice, in accents of inexpressible astonishment. “ There could be nothing to tell you about me ! ”

“ Much, Beatrice, much ; and you know it. Could you suppose me ungenerous enough to urge my previous claim ? My uncle told me I should see all confirmed, by finding you domesticated in this house ! Yes ; you could not write it to me, and therefore you did not write at all.”

“ We did write, Allan ! constantly—incessantly ! ” replied Beatrice, pale with astonishment at his reproachful accent, while he listened at first with a smile of hopeless incredulity. “ Surely, Allan, you do not imagine there is a thought in my heart I need conceal from you ! We were always to be

friends,—brother-and-sister friends,—though duty forbid me to accept a deeper love from you than friendship. Lady Edith knows all—”

“ Yes: they told me so!—they told me, Beatrice, that Lady Edith approved of your receiving Lord Iona’s addresses, and nothing short of that could have brought about my finding you in a house, always hitherto so shunned and abhorred by this dear friend of us both. Yes; she has consented, as I was told,—she encourages it, as I was assured,—yes, Lady Edith; you disapprove of my attachment to Beatrice, because it might cast a reflection on the prudence of Sir Evan. Months ago I was told all, and then hope, as well as happiness, died within me.”

“ Allan, dear Allan!” believe not a single word that any one has said, since you left Heatherbrae!” exclaimed Beatrice earnestly. “ It was Lady Edith’s deep love for yourself that brought us here,—the desire we both had to see you once again. I am unchanged in my resolution never to be yours; never to go anonymously into any family, but shall die as I live, grateful to all who will be the friend of one without relatives. Lord Iona is a mere amusing acquaintance, who has never yet spoken a word of sense to me, or expressed a single feeling of any description, approaching even to friendship. If you had seen our letters to you—”

“ Letters! Yes! I guess all now! My mother is beyond the reach of my reproaches, but she has betrayed me. I also wrote, Beatrice—often—very often—and longed, how anxiously! to hear from you both. It has been a gradual work, but oh, how sure!” continued Sir Allan, half speaking to himself, in quivering tones of anguish. “ The world itself seems to have broken down beneath me! yet I dare not wish it undone! The ignorance of my childhood was bliss indeed, and so were its attachments. Aunt Edith, I have learned much since we parted, but I have forgotten how to be happy; yet still it is a comfort to be here with you, that I may look and speak as miserably as I feel. How difficult for me not, when I see you both, to wish for old times again, and old affections! My mind and heart are tossed in a tempest of perplexity. Happiness and I have become strangers for ever. My own uncle, Father Ambrose, with the best intentions, has made it so. There seems no rest for me but in the grave!”

“ You are young to think so, Allan! It cannot be a right state of mind, that makes life otherwise than a blessing to one like you, on whom God has generously showered his choicest gifts. I am old. The taper of my life is burned to the very socket, therefore the last step of my pilgrimage must soon be taken; but surely it is not for Allan M^cAlpine, still young, and once so energetic, to sink in

cowardly despondency beneath any trials which human courage can conquer," said Lady Edith, affectionately taking Allan's hand in both of hers and retaining it kindly. "The tempest has swept away much, Allan, but not all. You have a heart for friendship, a mind for exertion, a position to fill, tenants to benefit, and a God to serve. Our Divine Creator made you free as the lark which soars to heaven, meaning that you shall obey Him with the voluntary homage of a grateful and devoted heart,—a heart enlightened by His word, taught by His Spirit, and governed by His will. For the sake of old times, Allan, you will listen to one who would part with life itself to rescue you from self-interested advisers. Try, then, to buffet along the tide of life, as reason and religion bid you, and only sink into the abyss at last, when all the purposes are completed for which God gave you life. Live up to your birthright, Allan."

When Lady Edith reflected that the young and ardent spirit beside her was yet in the full delirium of Jesuitism, she felt that she might as rationally entreat an invalid already infected with typhus fever not to go through the twenty days' crisis, as attempt to hold back the enthusiastic votary of Romanism, in the full excitement of his delusion, cheated, deceived, and betrayed by his own uncle. Still, though the hopes that had once rested on Sir Allan, and that seemed unchangeable as gold, were

all scattered like Autumn leaves, Lady Edith, her kind heart full of Sir Evan's memory and her love for Clanmarina, would not despond. Prayer and hope are sisters, and she resolved to live on both, while with a noble enthusiasm Lady Edith determined, as long as life remained, not to despair that the spell over Allan might yet be dissipated.

With a look of dignified affection, the venerable Lady Edith placed her hand within the arm of Sir Allan, and led him to the window, where her eye became mournfully fixed on the distant battlements of Cairngorum Castle, its ancient towers proudly overhanging the lowly cottages of Clanmarina. A look of death-like sorrow was in her countenance as she gazed on the glorious scene, and Sir Allan, clasping his hands over his face with a gesture of almost frenzied grief, groaned in bitterness of spirit.

They stood side by side for several minutes in silence, during which Beatrice felt a dizzy rush of agitation, and her beautiful countenance became convulsed with emotion when the vision of past days arose to the mind's eye of all. Her whole frame shook as in the blast of winter, but she became still as in death, when Lady Edith, in low earnest accents which trembled with agitation, said, still clinging to the young Chief's arm, "You left us, Allan, heart-broken with grief for the brave and generous uncle who fell in your defence. You

were kidnapped into the hands of a far different uncle, who has, not by fair means, but by very unscrupulous ones, perverted your inexperienced mind from the true faith of your pious ancestors, and you are come back labouring under a nightmare of superstition—bound heart and soul to undo all the good work that your best of friends, Sir Evan, did here.”

“Never!” muttered Sir Allan, vehemently, “May the round world perish first!”

“It is death in life to become a Jesuit!” continued Lady Edith, fervently. “The Popish religion is not a refreshing gale from heaven, but a destructive whirlwind, which will sweep away every independent wish you can form! Yes! I know the worst. Mr. Talbot, alias Ambrose, practised a cheat on Sir Evan, and has performed the rest of his task with most fearful success. You are his blind but willing victim.”

“In one thing let me set you right. My uncle, Father Ambrose, was till lately an enthusiastic Protestant! He assures me of that! At first he really regretted, beyond all measure, the effect produced on my mind by circumstances quite unforeseen—friends he inadvertently introduced to me—books he heedlessly left in my way—perplexities in his own mind on which he thoughtlessly consulted me!—these all brought convictions on my awakened conscience which he never anticipated.

Had my tutor deceived Sir Evan as to his own creed I should have despised and hated him, but he only deceived himself."

"Of course!" replied Lady Edith, with a perfectly incredulous smile. "You are still as unsuspicious, Allan, as in your boyhood, when it was impossible to persuade you that any one deliberately did wrong! Mr. Ambrose, then, had not any hand in the perversion of your mother's faith!"

"Believe me, none whatever! It would be undoubted injustice to suspect him on that score," said Sir Allan, in a strange agitated voice. "He was quite heart-broken about the whole affair, though of course his church gains 2,000*l.* a year by the conversion. It took Mr. Ambrose quite by surprise! For several days previously he was shut up during many anxious hours alone with my mother trying to dissuade her"——

"Did you say to 'dissuade,' or was it not rather to persuade? Allan! dear Allan! you are too good and truthful for the deep waters of Jesuitism," said Lady Edith, with a sad dreary smile; "but there is a hole in that mill-stone, which any one but yourself would see through. Look beyond the surface"——

"I do! but how you mistake Mr. Ambrose! He is, to say the real truth, particularly simple-minded, and very vacillating in all his opinions, but so humble that he continually seeks direction

from others—even from me!—I used to be present often when he stated some of his Protestant opinions to any casual Roman Catholic visitor, merely to draw forth the sentiments of others. There are deep perplexities to torture the mind of man, compared with which the rack itself is as nothing, but in the deep struggle of my soul, my uncle was the kindest of all kind advisers! His attachment to me is unbounded, and mine to him!”

“I thought that among the Jesuits no special preferences were allowed, that the Priests annihilated the heart as well as the intellect, and that you Proselytes must never either unbend or unfold your minds—neither feel nor expect any peculiar attachments, except in respect to your confessor,” said Lady Edith, sadly. “You know sportsmen say that in coursing, if any greyhound becomes partial to one individual more than to another, he is no longer fit for his work; and the same idea is carried out among those to whom you, Allan, are about to be united. You must become like wax, to be moulded at their discretion, and as Madame Tussaud models her wax at will into a Jack Sheppard, an O’Connell, or a Mrs. Fry, you must be ready to take any part appointed in the programme of your superiors. Chalk must be cheese in your eyes, if you are desired to think it so; and the blackest crime, Allan, must be white in your conscience, if you are commanded to perpetrate it.”

Sir Allan's eyes had of late years acquired that expression of bewildered, dreamy horror, which is invariably to be traced in those of recent Proselytes to Jesuitism; but while Lady Edith spoke, they exhibited a more natural and really wide-awake appearance than they had shown for months. There was once more his old bright intelligence of aspect, his old sensibility of expression, while he silently and anxiously watched for Lady Edith to go on, with the appearance of one slowly awakening out of a trance. The evident blindness of Sir Allan, in respect to the conduct and intentions of Father Ambrose his uncle, made Lady Edith fear that any check-string her feeble hand could apply to his Rome-ward progress, would be weak as a spider's web; yet she prayerfully resolved to hope where all seemed hopeless, and continued in accents tremulous with emotion, "You would need two pair of eyes, and two pair of ears to be sufficiently on your guard with those among whom you are now about to be enlisted!—Is it not true, Allan, that when the general of the Jesuits desires one of his Proselytes to become degraded or even criminal, the more your conscience might forbid the sacrifice of virtue, the greater becomes your merit in resisting your own convictions, and violating your own sense of right. Not only must you, if once a sworn victim, vow perpetual poverty, and give up every hallowed tie of earthly

affection, — not only must you be ready falsely to assume the character of a Protestant servant or tutor, to act as spy in any confiding family that is to be deceived and betrayed, — but you must not shrink from crimes the most odious, if these will enrich an order of religious hypocrites, who are individually poorer than beggars, but are collectively richer than the mines of Golconda. Jesuitism is the most successful conspiracy of sinful man against the health, happiness, and liberty of every young victim to its withering influence. Your confessor has already ascertained all the assailable points in your mind;—well he knows now, by deep underhand observation, how to shift his sails and steer his helm, so that you shall be shipwrecked, and your uncle himself, like a true wrecker, gain every fragment of the ruined craft.”

“Many an anxious thought I have had, many a feeling and many a fear,” muttered Sir Allan, meditatively. “I seem to have grown old beneath a burden of thought that no one could share! Solitary and bewildered at Rome, my perplexities of soul involved, —— oh! what did they not involve!”

“Allan, can you wonder if I feel as if the very spirit of Sir Evan himself might rise from the dead to warn you against the snares of Mr. Ambrose, to plead for the dear old place, for the home and the tenantry of your ancestors, for myself, your almost

heart-broken old friend. It would stir up the smouldering ashes of my existence, if I could yet hope to see you snatched from this fearful gulf, and no longer cowering in slavish obedience before your priestly uncle. Cowper describes the captive chained in a dungeon, but whose mind could soar unfettered to the skies ! It remained for Jesuitism to deprive man of his most glorious gift, freedom of thought and of prayer, to put out the eyes of the soul, and to leave you a mere breathing image, without will, responsibility, feeling, or conscience ! Allan ! in the name of Sir Evan, I implore you to pause, and may God himself protect you, for no power of man is able to cope with the falsehood and cunning that are employed for your destruction ! ”

There were tears in Sir Allan's eyes when the venerable Lady Edith held out her trembling hand to him ; and the expression of his countenance had become more natural,—less pre-occupied, and less oppressed with a nameless horror, than it had been. He looked for a short moment himself again, but at this instant a slow heavy step was heard coming along the passage, which caused the whole countenance of Sir Allan to change. It seemed as if a magical spell were upon him, for in a moment the dull, blank, musing look of wretchedness overclouded that handsome young face again ; the words froze on his lips, and he seemed alarmed and uneasy. There was a knock at the door, and

the grand authoritative bell of the chapel at the same moment sounded. Sir Allan rose to look out, and in an instant stood face to face with his uncle, the priest, who said, in a bland, smooth tone of courteous censure, though there was much suppressed excitement in his deep impressive voice, "I rightly guessed, my son, that your kind heart would bring you here, to visit our old friends, and am happy also to pay my sincere respects to Lady Edith and Miss Farinelli." A bitter smile parted his thin compressed lips, as he added, "At the same time do not forget, Allan, that though you have been beguiled into an imprudence by coming here, we are under strict rules of punctuality. Dinner before prayers, and there is not now a moment to lose. Good morning, Lady Edith! Excuse this necessary interruption, health must be attended to, and our watch-word is obedience."

Lady Edith listened with a quiet stateliness of demeanour. Now for a moment the pride of manhood and of independence, flashed proudly in the bright eyes of the young Chief, and his whole figure seemed to expand with a new dignity. He paused, as if about, with almost despairing resolution, to assert his own freedom; but Mr. Ambrose, whose eyes in general scarcely ever looked at anything, as if they were only placed in his head for ornament, not for use, now fixed them on Sir Allan with an intensity perfectly startling. Slowly then

the light of intellect became quenched in the countenance of Sir Allan, his expression grew haggard, his cheek of an ashy hue, and, with one farewell look of speechless anguish at Lady Edith and Beatrice, ashamed to yield, yet unable to resist, he slowly, and evidently with great unwillingness, disappeared.

Lady Edith, shivering with agitation, exchanged a look of unutterable sorrow with Beatrice, who, pale as ashes, felt it a grief under which to wither and grow old, when she thought that never more was she to listen, probably, to all the hundred things she had hoped to hear from Allan, and that all she had to tell him must remain for ever unsaid; but her thoughts were in a moment transferred to her kind-hearted and aged benefactress, who sunk upon the sofa, exhausted with agitation, and burst into an agony of tears, saying, "Anything else I could have borne better, but to see all the noble works that dear Sir Evan lived to accomplish destroyed by his own beloved Allan,—to see Allan cheated of his all, enslaved and degraded,—why have I survived to witness that! Yet let me not question the wisdom and mercy of all that is ordained. I am crossing the last arch in the mysterious bridge of life, and possibly there is yet something left for me to do, that may cheer my latest breath with the consciousness of having not lived my last hours in vain."

Beatrice struggled for composure, but large tears drenched her long dark eyelashes as they drooped on her pallid cheek, and she thought, "How true is that ancient saying, 'The crowning sorrow of sorrow is the remembrance of happiness for ever departed!' Even if those feelings were a deception, would that we might all dream them over again! But the past has vanished like a shadow in the stream;—like a flashing meteor, that leaves us all darker than before it shone."

Beatrice conscientiously believed herself not at all in danger of becoming attached to Lord Iona, yet she caught herself constantly, incessantly, and invariably thinking of him, and certainly rather more interested in the reflection of her own mirror than formerly. There was a gay light-heartedness in his manner, extremely attractive from the very first, but on more intimate acquaintance she discovered, that beneath a surface of strange wayward originality, and odd whimsical thoughts, there lay a mine hitherto deeply hid and unsuspected, of solid thought, genuine and sterling as Californian gold. On every subject that had come under his own observation, he had evidently noticed very acutely and thought much. He bought every new book of any distinction; yet like all those who buy many, he read little, but that little was thoroughly remembered; and he seemed one of those fortunate people, who, if they merely dip into an

odd volume, in the most casual manner, pick up more in five minutes, than a plodding conscientious reader in five hours. Beatrice never saw Lord Iona study any work more maturely, than merely standing ten minutes with his elbow leaning on the chimney-piece, his legs crossed, and the volume dangling carelessly in his hand, while he seemed leaping on, from chapter to chapter, in a perfect steeple-chase; yet she felt confident that he could have reviewed it for any magazine better than the author himself. It was the same in respect to the discussion of religious subjects or politics. Lord Iona's mind seemed distinctly made up upon them all, and he was one of the very few who preferred forming his own opinions to taking them up ready-made. Sometimes, in a sketchy slap-dash style, he hit off an entire subject with a few strokes of his graphic humour, so that Beatrice thought Lord Iona appeared to go over the ground with the rapidity and precision of a thorough-bred racer, while all who preceded or followed him in conversation seemed lumbering and heavy in comparison, as a cart-horse.

"Iona!" said Lady Anne, one day, in a complaining tone, "I might as well attempt to argue with a whirlwind as with you! The great secret of success on all occasions is, to take people by surprise—and you always do, Mr. Cousin. We must put a drag on the wheels of your chariot, to make you keep pace with other people."

“ Yes! as drivers break in a too spirited horse by yoking it into a London omnibus;” replied Lord Iona, assuming a tone of good-humoured conceit. “ People all live and think at railway speed, Anne, while nothing makes any permanent impression on anybody. It is like the way we look at a landscape in travelling now, when you can scarcely tell a tree from a house, or a horse from a donkey, and it does not matter for the passing moment which they are; but, long ago, every object was deliberately viewed in every light, and remembered for ever.”

“ Suppose we all make an old-fashioned tour this summer on horseback, to admire the country at our leisure? You shall ride Plantagenet, and carry me on a pillion behind to point out what you should admire.”

“ In that case I must have eyes at the back of my head, Anne, to see what I should of course admire most! I shall be quite ready to go on the thirteenth month of this year.”

“ Or, suppose we fix it for the fifty-third week? —and in case any one else asks me, I shall now label myself, like the railway-carriages — ‘ Pre-engaged.’ ”

“ Not to me, Anne! We know each other too well; for, as the poet says, how soon you’ll ‘ shift the merry toy-shop of your heart!’ Our meetings are always pleasant to me, as a breeze that has

passed over a garden of roses, but I never expect the said breeze to settle itself with me for life!"

"You know, Iona, that water requires to be kept incessantly agitated to preserve it from stagnating, and my mind really needs the effervescing powder of variety and amusement," said Lady Anne. "Who would have dreamed, long ago, that either Sir 'Allan or I would have plunged into monastic life? but I am always in extremes. How happy and cheerful he and I used to be at Rome together!"

"And how happy you might be yet!" answered Lord Iona, in a tone of heartfelt kindness; but Lady Anne sighed heavily, and turned away—her face pale, and her eyes filled with sudden tears, as she gazed at Beatrice, who was speaking at the moment to the young Chief, Allan looking now, in his Highland dress, quite himself again, in all the dignity of free and intellectual manhood.

CHAPTER IX.

“ But flowers of amaranth spring not in the shade,
And faith, hope, charity, are vain parade
In him whose sour abstraction to the cell
Of malcontent misanthropy retires,
Forgetting and forgotten, there to dwell,
Cumbering the ground.” —HOYLE.

LADY EDITH and Beatrice, when they saw the unnecessary wretchedness endured around them by those who preferred “ a voluntary humility and worshipping of images ” to the free exercise of their liberty and faculties, were reminded of a celebrated old picture often described in books. It represents Satan gambling with a young man for his soul, and the stake his victim hopes to win consists of wealth, jewels, equipages, every sensual pleasure and every frivolous amusement which the natural heart of unrenewed man is apt to desire ; but strangely otherwise are the snares to Romanism baited ! health, sleep, food, light, air, liberty, and affection, are all to be sacrificed, as well as the worship of a Holy Trinity in Unity, which is to be set aside for the adoration of a woman, not only

made equally an object of worship with the God of creation, but substituted in His place of glory.

Lady Edith was seated one day on a camp-stool in the glen enjoying a bright gleam of sunshine, and listening delightedly to the loud roar of the cataract, when she suddenly observed two figures strolling along a shady lane towards the little rocky recess in which she had sat down to rest. Their heads were both down, and the conversation appeared so deep and earnest, that they were evidently unconscious of all surrounding objects, so anxiously did they listen to each other.

The tall figure of a man in black, standing occasionally still, in the vehemence of animated discussion, while he demonstrated gracefully with his arms, might have formed an admirable accident to any artist studying the picturesque in that beautiful landscape ; and beside him was a slight girlish form, enveloped in black and white draperies of a conventual aspect, and almost crouching with apprehensive timidity of look and attitude, as she slowly, as well as very feebly moved along. Her step was almost tottering, her head drooping, and her hands folded with an air of hopeless, heartless dejection ; but still the girl's attention seemed in a state of fascination so intense, that Lady Edith could have touched her without disturbing the dream-like absorption of her thoughts as they approached.

It did not long remain a mystery to Lady Edith

who these were. From the second glance she recognised the tall portly figure of Father Eustace, which could not be mistaken, though his usually solemn countenance had in it now a sentimental expression not very usual, while he spoke in accents less grave and stern than common.

But who was the companion of Father Eustace? Lady Edith looked at the pale, wan, wasted countenance, and the attenuated form, which spoke of suffering and sorrow, of long fasting, of agonizing thoughts, of sleepless nights, and of painful austerities. She looked at a face pallid as death and convulsed with agitation. Never in all her long experience of life had Lady Edith seen any young face so utterly mournful. Never!—Yes! it was all that remained of Bessie McRonald!

Lady Edith covered her face with her hands, and in a moment, quick as thought, she had before her mind's eye the recollection of that day when she had first seen Robert Carre escorting Bessie home, with an air of rustic gallantry and of honest-hearted attachment; while then her favourite young pupil, in all the bloom of health, had a countenance beaming like sun-light, with modest happiness and grateful attachment. Now, like a devotee to the old man of the mountains, Bessie was but a mechanical puppet, without even the privilege of thought.

“Surely,” meditated Lady Edith, “we injure a

beneficent God in our thoughts, by imagining that His best gifts are to be thus abjured ! If I invited a party of children to my house, and carefully provided for them every pleasure that the heart of childhood could innocently enjoy, how should I feel towards any one of these, who could not be persuaded that I was in earnest, when desiring him to be happy, but who turned his back to my arrangements for his felicity, who persisted in considering me severe and cruel, and who sat all day in silence with his face to the wall ! How lately Providence seemed to have prepared for Bessie and Robert the brightest remains of earthly happiness that this world now affords to fallen man, in mutual confidence and mutual affection ! but that destroyer has entered, and sad indeed is the result."

An unbidden tear sprung into the eye of Lady Edith as she gazed at this strangely deluded girl, apparently sinking into the grave, a voluntary victim to the saddest delusions that ever robbed mankind of their senses and happiness. Bessie's dejected steps had carried her nearly past the retired nook in which Lady Edith sat, when she accidentally looked up, and with a sudden cry of almost agonized recognition, was about to rush forward and clasp the hand of her former benefactress, but a look from the powerful eye of Father Eustace stopped her, as if she had been paralysed, and she shrunk back to his side like a

bird under the fascination of a serpent. Lady Edith gave Bessie a kind smile of encouragement, but she ventured to do no more in return than to make a respectful curtsy, and pass mournfully on. Father Eustace then in a low voice said to her, while assuming now a tone of stern authority, "You have not yet sufficiently crushed down those sinful attachments which should hereafter be considered odious, when felt towards an obstinate heretic such as Lady Edith. The sorrow, too, that you still cherish, and were describing to me now, respecting Robert Carre, is wrong and unavailing. Mingling as that young man does in scenes of worldly occupation, he will soon console himself with some new object of affection."

"Never! No, Bessie, never!" exclaimed a voice close to the speaker, and in a moment Robert Carre had bounded over a hedge, sprung across a ditch, and approaching with rapid strides stood before the startled girl, his dark eyes flashing with excitement, and his lip quivering with emotion. "Never did man give to woman a deeper or more lasting love than mine for you, Bessie. You were the first to possess my affections!—they are now like the leaves of autumn, wafted in withered desolation before the blast, but never more to take root for any other, or to live in this world again. I mourn for you now as dead, and as dead I forgive you, too."

Lady Edith had scarcely believed it possible for a human countenance to express so much sorrowful and solemn emotion; but when he turned to the Jesuit, Robert's eyes shot fire, his lips became compressed as if the very blood would spring from them, and there was a stern determination in his finely formed countenance, before which a bolder man than Father Eustace might have quailed, as he evidently did.

"Fear nothing, Mr. Eustace," said Robert in a tone of heart-broken contempt, "vengeance is not for man, and least of all for a Protestant Christian. You are perfectly safe from me; yet, 'the day must come when every husband and father in Britain will banish such as you from his house, and may I live to see it!'" *

"Bessie!" added he, turning slowly round to the trembling girl, and his voice changed to a tone of the tenderest pity, "that bad man has succeeded, and we are parted for ever and ever; but our love has been the very loadstone of my existence. The widest sea on earth is nothing compared to the gulf that separates me now from you; I would have crossed deserts or oceans to prove my affection, but not one inch of the ground that divides our immortal souls. There is no hope for me now, and not even the remotest wish left that we should ever be united."

* Saints' Tragedy.

A deep intense glow overspread the countenance of Bessie for a moment, and then it became livid as death ; she leaned for support against a tree by her side, and seemed scarcely to breathe or live, while Robert continued to speak in a tone of impetuous emotion :—

“ All the happy schemes of my boyhood, all that gave energy to my exertions, all the pleasant hopes of my after life are extinguished;—but so let it be ! I forgive you, Bessie, though I must wander on alone through life, knowing that even in eternity you have given up the hope that we shall meet. Had you been true to me, I should have laboured for your happiness with my whole heart, my whole ardour, my whole body and spirit. If my renouncing you could have secured your happiness, would I have selfishly hesitated ? No ! But what consolation can remain when I see you consigned to all the nameless degradations of the confessional, when I see you blindly obeying men who insult the memory of their own mothers, and of whose real character and intentions you know nothing ; while they blaspheme that very marriage rite from which they borrow all their cant—when I see you the slave of those who render the good bad, and the bad worse—when I see you taught to mistake the flames of hell for the distant light of paradise itself ! ”

The wan, transparent face of Bessie had been

turned towards Robert; and the wild, almost maniacal, expression of her eye had become subdued while he spoke. She seemed like one about to awake out of a dream, and struggling to release herself. Hot tears now rolled down her face, like a torrent of liquid fire; but Father Eustace then, by letting fall his hat, and making a sudden movement to pick it up, caught her attention. He fixed his bold, bright eyes for an instant upon Bessie, who looked at him in return, with an expression of abject fear,—a cold shudder passed through her frame, her tongue seemed frozen, and again there was the strange, wandering, lunatic aspect in her beautiful features. Robert watched the whole progress of this scene with wondering sorrow; and then added, in accents of most solemn warning, broken and nearly stifled with grief,—“Bessie! we are indeed parted in heart, and soul, and life; but to my dying hour I shall wish you well. Surely, you will not always be the tool of that deep, designing man! There is no stamp on the base metal of mankind, Bessie, to tell when they are worthless and false; but you will find him out at last. He makes you see visions and dream dreams now; and I no more blame you than if you were in the delirium of a brain-fever. Little as you value my prayers now, Bessie, I still pray for you daily, as I have done from our childhood. In the dark hours of many a sleepless night, I have lately

felt the whole comfort of knowing that my supplications for you will yet be heard. At present, nothing can touch your feelings: neither love nor hatred, wealth nor poverty, admiration nor scorn, —all are alike to one petrified by superstition as you are. But the time may come, when that magic spell shall be broken, and rational piety again consecrate every human feeling.”

Bessie's face was invisible, but her whole frame shook with emotion. Father Eustace now grasped her hand and crossed himself, when she looked up at him, though he uttered not a word; but there was an electric telegraph in his eye, which seemed always understood by his proselytes and obeyed.

“I cannot delude myself, as you so evidently do,” continued young Carre, “by supposing that it is necessary for Mr. Eustace, or any other priest, to act as my ambassador in asking all I need. Either in the solitude of my closet, or among the glories of creation, I am allowed a direct access to the Throne of Grace. A Protestant clergyman comes to me as an ambassador from God, whose glorious presence we could not behold and live; but, now that Mr. Clinton turns his back, of late, to the congregation, and his face to the altar, he seems to forget that his message is to us. I hope Mr. Clinton does not mean to deny that St. Paul says, ‘We are ambassadors for Christ.’” Robert paused a moment in solemn thought; and then

continued, in a low, impressive voice,—“ Bessie ! listen to one whose broken heart shall beat for you while it beats at all. Do not irrevocably pledge yourself to be under any man’s guidance, instead of God’s. There is only one instance in Holy Scripture of man’s confessing to man : that instance was Judas, when he confessed to the Jews ; and little did that confession avail him either with God or man. May you return one day, Bessie, to the simple faith of your Bible ; and though I shall then be far away, yet, even at the farthest end of the earth, it will gladden my heart to hear that the bird has escaped from the snare. Farewell, Bessie !—a long, long, long farewell !

“ Oh ! that we two lay sleeping
In one home in the churchyard sod,
With our limbs at rest on the quiet earth’s breast,
And our souls at home with God ! ”

Robert remained for several moments silently gazing at Bessie, more in pity than in anger or sorrow ; while the colour burned like fire on her cheeks, and it would evidently have been a relief if the earth had kindly opened and swallowed her up. He then turned towards the priest. Father Eustace stood immoveable in attitude as in countenance, his long coat almost touching the ground, like a black petticoat, and his hat slouched over his eyes, which were now, as usual, carefully veiled from observation, by the dropping of his eyelids.

Lady Edith thought she had never seen so singular a contrast. The clear eye, the open brow, the attitude of native dignity, the frank expression of Robert Carre, and the free action of his finely-formed limbs, beside Father Eustace, who stood in the position of a perpendicular corpse, his eyes closed, his mouth pursed in, his hands folded together, his feet ranged side by side, and his whole figure crouching with assumed humility.

For a moment Robert Carre seemed about to address him, and fixed on Father Eustace a look that seemed to read his very soul; but he suddenly paused, and, with a glance of stern contempt that might have done for ten emperors, turned away. He then respectfully lifted his hat to Lady Edith, gave one last look at Bessie, who was leaning her forehead against a tree, and, springing again over the hedge, disappeared into the forest.

CHAPTER X.

“L’honnête homme est celui qui ne vole pas sur les grands chemins, et qui ne tue personne.”—LA BRUYERE.

“What signifies what weather we have in a country going to ruin like ours? Taxes rising and trade falling. Money flying out of the kingdom, and Jesuits swarming into it. I know at this time no less than an hundred and twenty-seven Jesuits between Charing Cross and Temple-bar.”—GOLDSMITH’S *Good-natured Man*.

PREPARATORY to the impending contested election, the village of Clanmarina was covered with placards, setting forth, in tremendous type, the once-honoured name of “M^cAlpine for ever.” These placards were torn down every day, and every day renewed. It was quite the golden age at Clanmarina now; while the agent, Mr. Gordon, seemed to have become a perfect political Cræsus, ready to buy anybody, or anything, at any price. It was indeed a sight now to behold Lord and Lady Eaglescairn, when they first began their unpractised attempts to “do a little popularity.” Always ambitious to be the ruling family at Clanmarina, though not liking the arts of popularity nor its expenses, they now threw aside every hin-

drance to success, while evidently enjoying, with all the excitement of a horse-race, the dash and bustle, the manœuvring, the pushing, the conquering of difficulties, the incessant arrivals and departures, the discussions over the dinner table, the driving, the riding, the sauntering, the galloping, and the whole complicated game of politics. They seemed to have passed an act of oblivion and indemnity respecting all differences in religion as well as in politics, while inviting, with almost frantic hospitality, every voter, and every relation of a voter, to dine and to vote with them.

“M^cAlpine and Cheap Bread!”—“M^cAlpine and Independence!” read Robert Carre, one day as he walked through the village. “Give us, ‘M^cAlpine and Protestantism!’—that would gain every vote in the district! What independence could there ever be under priestly tyranny?”

It was evidently a very forced interest that Sir Allan took in his own canvas; and Lady Edith, who knew by heart every intonation of his voice, every turn of his countenance, plainly perceived how unwilling a tool her beloved Allan was in the strong grasp of those from whom he had not strength of mind to disentangle himself. The baleful eye of Mr. Ambrose seemed to possess a mesmeric power over his young nephew, and was fastened for ever upon him, especially when in the presence of Lady Edith, the revival of whose influence he evidently apprehended; and as he

generally kept Sir Allan aloof from all intercourse with her or Beatrice, they were surprised one morning to see Mr. Ambrose pass his arm within that of Sir Allan, and after a short, but earnest consultation, lead him up to where, in a state of voteless insignificance, they sat, with an evident desire of entering into conversation. It was obvious that Sir Allan accompanied his uncle most unwillingly; and Lady Edith did not wonder, after she had ascertained the purport of his unexpected advance; for while the young Chief's countenance became scarlet with emotion, even Mr. Ambrose looked a little abashed in opening a negotiation with Lady Edith, by saying in his most insinuating tone—

“ I find, Lady Edith, that the extent of your long-trying and unalterable affection for my nephew is now to be most efficiently proved. I am sure he may reckon upon your utmost influence to benefit him; and during our canvass to-day I discovered that his election must be won or lost according as three of the electors vote—old Carre, of Daisy-bank, and his two sons, over whom you are believed to have the very greatest, the most unbounded influence.”

There was a pause of several minutes before Lady Edith could reply, which she did in a low tone of concentrated emotion, yet of the gentlest earnestness. “ What is there on earth that I would not do really to benefit Allan M^cAlpine ?

From his childhood till now, not a day has elapsed without my praying that in all things he might prosper; but little did I dream that the hour should come when I could not even wish him success,—when it should become my duty to counteract as much as possible his wishes, and almost to seem like an adversary. In the coming election he appears not to me as the much-honoured Chief of his noble clan, but only as the nominee of Lord Eaglescairn. You, Allan!” added Lady Edith, addressing her young favourite in a tone of mournful incredulity, “Sir Allan McAlpine of Clanmarina, carrying the Popish banner of Eaglescairn! Think what such a sight must be to the old hereditary adherents of your family, to the old friends of Sir Evan, to friends such as myself and Mr. Clinton.”

“You are quite mistaken as to Mr. Clinton,” replied Mr. Ambrose, in a dry, measured voice, and with scarcely subdued triumph. “He promises to do nothing against my nephew. In fact, his generous friendship has not failed us in the hour of need, like some others, who say much and do little.”

“You cannot mean that Mr. Clinton will avowedly support your candidate, Mr. Ambrose, even though he be Sir Allan McAlpine?” asked Lady Edith, with astonished dismay. “A Protestant clergyman cannot surely sanction any candidate possessing Jesuit views:—observe, Allan, that I

cannot call them principles. Does Mr. Clinton promise you his actual support?"

"Not openly," replied Sir Allan, frankly, "but he engages not to oppose me, unless I make any distinct declaration against what he calls 'that branch of the Church established in this country.'"

"Such jargon is perfectly clear to me, Allan! Your intentions might be distinct enough to Mr. Clinton, were he not afflicted with the deafness of one who does not wish to hear. Believe me, Allan, nothing can estrange my long-cherished attachment to yourself personally. If you became Superior of the Jesuits yourself, that could not blot out the memory of past years, unless it broke my heart entirely. Yet, my dear Allan, the times are not yet gone by, when Christians, rather than yield one principle of Protestant truth, would suffer that martyrdom of the heart which is ten thousand times worse than that of the body. I could much rather sacrifice this right hand than thus speak to you as my conscience bids me now. Since I must, then, choose between my love to God or man, Allan, that forces me to use any little influence I have against your having a vote in the councils of this great nation."

"Console yourself if I gain, Aunt Edith, that I shall never be a very leading member," said Allan, sadly smiling; "my Catholic duty obliges me to act by the decision of those who consult no individual wishes,—not even individual duties,—but

only the interests of their own Church. I have neither wit, eloquence, humour, nor assurance enough ever to become a popular speaker."

"Nor independence, Allan. Any one chained like a galley-slave to the oar of Jesuitism has parted with the noblest incentive to exertion; that freedom of thought and of action which gives energy and dignity to every Protestant Christian."

Lady Edith's mild eye was fixed on the countenance of Allan with an expression deeply sad and thoughtful, while he listened with a look of polite impatience, and of most evident pain; his colour deepened to scarlet, and his embarrassment every moment increased; for the strange, glittering eye of Mr. Ambrose was fastened upon him with an unwinking intensity perfectly startling. The commanding power of such a look few could resist, and of those few Sir Allan was not one. His own eye sunk beneath its irresistible influence, as he gathered himself up and slowly withdrew; but when Sir Allan's groom appeared at the door, bringing round "Skirt-the-Moon," a fine, spirited led horse, the young Chief, with some of his old energy, sprang upon the noble animal's back, and dug the spur into his sides with heedless irritation. It reared and plunged furiously, but finding a rider so bold and skilful was not to be unseated, Skirt-the-Moon sprang forward at a gallop, while Sir Allan, enlivened by the conflict, raised his hat to Lady Edith, with a smile of melancholy affection,

and rapidly vanished. Mr. Ambrose angrily muttered to himself that he hated to see his nephew with that heavy-cavalry manner, while Lady Edith then turned slowly away, sadly musing on the change of times since Sir Evan used to be a hereditary bulwark of the throne, and the hereditary opponent of that foreign faith which would supplant the royal authority in all things.

“Surely,” thought she, “Scotland will assert herself once more, and not be priest-ridden in her elections, and even in territorial titles.” What more nearly concerned Lady Edith, however, was, to defeat those about to cause the downfall of all her own labours in Clanmarina, as well as the utter ruin of Sir Allan ; and as he disappeared up the hill, she musingly repeated to herself these lines :—

“Will you be cozen’d, sir, by these air-blown fancies,
These male hysterics, by starvation bred
And huge conceit? Cast off God’s gift of manhood,
And, like the dog in the adage, drop the true bone,
With snapping at the sham one in the water?
What were you born a man for?—*Saints’ Tragedy.*”

Beatrice, meanwhile, had taken advantage of being so near Cairngorum Castle to stroll in that direction, and, always unwilling to make Lady Edith melancholy, she availed herself of this opportunity to go alone. As she advanced towards the old towers and battlements, Beatrice gazed with emotions of solemn regret at the dismal dust-

covered ivy, at the long approach overgrown with weeds, at the carriage-track covered with grass, at the door-step green with moss, at the shutters closed, at the chimneys without smoke, at the whole desolate aspect of a beloved home, once adorned with so much care, and ringing with every sound of earthly joy. Sir Evan's voice seemed in her ear, of friendly welcome to those who entered, of glad companionship to contemporaries, of ready benevolence to the needy, of indulgent affection to herself and Allan.

Through a small window opening into the hall, Beatrice looked earnestly in at the once familiar objects there, now sad memorials of what had been happiness. Sir Evan's own gun lay on the white marble table, unmoved since the day of his death, and the Highland bonnet he usually wore was beside it. Allan's fishing-rod stood before the nearest chair, and her own old garden bonnet was yet suspended on a peg where she had hastily hung it when she returned home on that fatal morning.

Every inanimate object was unaltered, but in whatever had belonged to life there was now the ghastly aspect of death, or sorrow, or absence. When Beatrice had wandered towards "the old fairy mount," she sat down beneath "the haunted cedar," once the scene of all her frolics with Allan, while now its moaning branches, as they creaked and groaned in the winter blast, seemed alone to

preserve the voice of other days. That sound which had formerly saddened her joyous childhood seemed now in melancholy unison with the mournful changes already made by time, and the still worse changes to be made hereafter as the fruits of a delusive superstition.

Beatrice was buried in a painful reverie, meditating on the change in her old and still much-loved companion, who had said in her hearing that day to Mr. Ambrose, when asked to accompany his uncle there, that he could not yet face a visit to his home, and that if ever he mustered courage to go, it must be alone. She could not wonder that on such an occasion he avoided the companionship of his tutor-uncle, and she was idly conjecturing whether Sir Allan never felt sufficient freedom of thought to ask himself if he had not been unfairly tricked into his present strange position, when a light step attracted the attention of Beatrice, a dark shadow appeared on the grass; she started, turned round, and gasped as if for life itself when she found herself face to face with Sir Allan.

“Beatrice! dear Beatrice!” he exclaimed, seizing her hand before she had in the slightest degree recovered her astonishment. “If this world could afford me a pleasure, it is that you and I should once more stand on this spot together, as we promised each other, beneath the shadow of our own old haunted cedar. Is not the remembrance of our

past lives here, like that of a long sunny day sadly recalled to memory after the darkness of night has closed in ?”

“ Yes, Allan ! that aged tree is the only remaining witness here of all our former happiness,” replied Beatrice in low tremulous accents, while tears stood in her lovely eyes, and a scarlet flush rose suddenly to her cheek. “ This place is haunted indeed by many an old remembrance. Dear,—oh ! how very dear, to us both ! Once more, then, we meet here as friends !”

“ Friends, Beatrice ! much more than friends !” exclaimed Allan, in hurried accents of strong emotion. “ It must and shall be a far dearer tie that is to unite us.”

“ You forget, Allan, how impossible that is,—how every way impossible ! Be a brother to me always ;—even Mr. Ambrose can hardly object to that, though, who can tell what the result would be if he did. Allan ! his influence over you seems like magic.”

The young Chief bit his lip, till the blood seemed about to spring out, and took some hurried, but thoughtful turns up and down on the grass. He appeared long quite unable to reply ; seeing which, Beatrice, whose heart throbbed as if she could hear it beat, continued in scarcely audible accents:—

“ Everything combines to separate us ! Once, Allan, it was only the consciousness of my own friendless unknown origin that divided us, for then

we had one faith, one hope, one mind. — Oh, Allan ! my kind companion,—my old and very dear friend ! how sad to me, the utter ruin that awaits you ! ”

Beatrice covered her face with her hands and burst into tears, while sobs broke her utterance, as she exclaimed in accents of heart-rending emotion,—“ I had a bright and glorious vision for you once ! I used to fancy you fulfilling all the high destinies and generous enterprises that Sir Evan bequeathed to his beloved successor,—but now, I am haunted by the image that never leaves me, of Allan M^cAlpine withering out his life, like a felon in a cell, and his place filled by priestly cormorants, levelling all that is good and happy around us in the dust.”

“ Never ! never ! ” muttered Sir Allan, in a deep low tone of concentrated emotion, as he gazed around on the glorious scenery of Cairngorum, restored for a moment to the feelings of his boyhood. “ No, Beatrice ! you must be the talisman to preserve me,—to defeat your own prophecy ! I cannot,—oh ! I cannot for worlds relinquish the hope of our yet being united. Honour, truth, and every feeling of devoted attachment, of unbounded love, bid me tell you, Beatrice, that for your sake I could still throw off the new ties that were about to enthrall me. Yes, Beatrice, in these our old and happy haunts I feel as if emancipated from an agitated dream. All the joyful memories of other

days, and of healthy human affections, are fresh in my heart now, with all the deep devoted love I so long and so secretly cherished for you. Yes! Beatrice, we must again be all in all to each other."

"Impossible, Allan! oh, how impossible!" exclaimed Beatrice, while tears flowed down her face. "Consider me dead in so far as any such engagement is concerned. I cannot esteem and scarcely could love one so strangely perverted as to become an apostate to our faith. Allan! are we not aliens now on the only earthly subject of real importance? and could we ever enter on that sacred engagement which ought to unite people for both worlds? Even the brother-and-sister confidence and affection from which I hoped to derive most of my future happiness in life, can scarcely now continue."

"Beatrice!" exclaimed Sir Allan, in accents of reproachful astonishment; "with you, I learned the first rudiments of happiness and love. Can you, then, look around on the scenes of our childhood and not wish that, as we were friends from the first, we should remain so to the last? How could you for a moment dream of forgetting our early affection, and of discarding me at once like an old hat or a torn parasol?"

"Allan," replied Beatrice in low accents that trembled with emotion, "it withers up my heart to say so; but you know as I do, that we can

never, never be to each other what we once were. You were the first to forget,—for have you not forgotten those principles which it was formerly our greatest happiness to share? It seems a less agony at once to break off our mutual confidence, rather than to endanger my own mind by holding any confidential intercourse with yours; for you must remember how in old times you always led and I always followed. That must not be now! Mine is a simple, undoubting, Bible faith, such as any old woman in a cottage might attain to. It will last me through life and support me in death; but I dare not hereafter enter into controversy. Allan, dear Allan! my first and only companion; I can but pray for you.”

Beatrice covered her face with both her hands, and sobbed with uncontrollable grief, while Sir Allan, pale as a spectre, fixed and pallid as stone, stood by her side, and evidently struggled as if throwing off a spell. His eyes lost their glazed unnatural look, and his mind appeared restored from the dreamy abstraction of a habitual trance. Still Beatrice continued to speak, her own eyes closed; for she felt unable to look Allan in the face without betraying the depth of her emotion:—

“Very sorrowful indeed has been the ordeal to my feelings, Allan, before I could allow myself to be convinced that you must scarcely be even a brother to me. I have prayed and wept for you, Allan, and while the breath of life remains shall I

not do so still! But, with all my old sisterly affection for you, and much of my old respect, I dare not trust myself even to speak on the sacred subjects of our faith. Without some sympathy in these there can be no friendship. It is not that I distrust the strength of the good Protestant cause, but I do greatly distrust my own ability to maintain it against you. The staff is strong, though the hand that would wield it be feeble and incompetent."

After a short pause of sorrowful reflection, Beatrice added slowly, calmly, and very deliberately, "From this hour, Allan, I finally and for ever resign all claim on your attachment, such as it was on that never forgotten day when we met here, long, long ago. I do not speak under any excitement. Grateful as I am for your generous attachment, it has always been my wish that you should remain free as the winter breeze around us now,—and you are. I sat down yesterday to write you a farewell letter, Allan, but the pen so trembled in my hand that it would not obey me."

Beatrice turned away, her face drenched in tears, and was hurriedly departing, when Sir Allan imperatively stopped her, saying, evidently under an irresistible impulse of the very strongest emotion, which rendered his words almost inaudible,—“We must not part, Beatrice! You—you only could give a new tone to the broken strings of my mind and heart. This world without you would be one wide

unlimited blank, for yours is the name that in death will be found engraved on my heart. The flame has smouldered on, it can never be extinguished. Let its light then remain to preserve me from final desolation! Do not thus break the only tie that can yet bind me to life. Nothing holds me back from becoming a Jesuit Priest but my deep, unquenchable love for you. You must act like a conductor to lightning, and lead me aright. In that hour when I learn to despair of your affection, I shall be driven on to take the plunge from which there is no return."

"Allan, think no more of me: there is another far more suited to make you happy than I;" said Beatrice in a tone of earnest kindness. "There would be no disparity of birth, no difference of sentiment, if you could but form a mutual attachment with that accomplished and most fascinating Lady Anne. Forget me from this day, and consider what a home you might have with her!"

"Impossible! oh, how impossible! Lady Anne attracts, but she does not attach me, Beatrice; you only can bring me back to life and its enjoyments," said Sir Allan with tremulous ardour. "For you and with you I might yet attempt to be happy."

"Allan," said Beatrice, firmly, but most sorrowfully, "once I loved you, it matters not now how deeply and truly. I believed you unfaithful to your first affection and to your religious principles, and I taught myself to consider that you had become a

stranger to both. We are aliens in religion, and I dare not let my old attachment revive. Your influence over me, always great, might become irresistible. Take, then, my farewell sisterly advice: I see and believe that Lady Anne is already partial to you. I can scarcely be mistaken in saying so. Would that the partiality were reciprocal! For myself, Allan, you never, never can be more to me than you are now. All the roses that surrounded us in childhood are turned to thorns; but come what may, your name shall be ever dear to me. It shall be the last uttered in my latest earthly prayers."

Beatrice, overwhelmed by her feelings, turned and almost fled home, leaving Sir Allan plunged in a deep, intense, and most mournful reverie. He gave a long earnest gaze around him, like the farewell look with which a man at the point of death might have bid adieu to this world, and with an aspect lost and woe-begone beyond all expression, he turned away, while every tree around seemed to groan in the blast, and heavy clouds gathered over the noble towers of Cairngorum Castle. Few things in life cause an interest so startling and exciting, as to stand among the unaltered scenes of our own childhood when feeling that all is changed within. It seemed to Allan now but a few very short hours since, in his animated boyhood, he had stood there beside Beatrice, both in the zenith of youthful happiness; and since then, while her countenance had matured into an expression of thoughtful, bright intelligence,

his own, bronzed by an Italian sun—and still it must be allowed handsomer than any other—was wasted with care, haggard with sleepless nights of anxious thought, and prematurely aged with strange austerities, that now in a lucid interval he almost blushed to think of. As Allan caught a glimpse of his own wan and worn countenance in the stream that had often reflected it in boyhood, he started, and almost asked himself who he was—then, turning away with a sigh, he said, “Who could have thought it once? Am I not a lie to myself? Yes! I am become but a weed in this world, fit only to be trampled on and forgotten. All is as it should be, if I am humbled in the dust.

“‘But doleful nights, and self-inflicted tortures—
Are these the love of God? Is he well pleased
With this stern holocaust of health and joy?’”

Beatrice, on her return home, was surprised to find on her toilette a letter, crumpled and ill-folded, as if put up in great haste, and directed to her in a youthful, almost childish hand. Truly, it was a wild-looking, hieroglyphical scrawl, almost as illegible as an arrow-headed inscription. She tore open the uncouth-looking seal, and discovered, with surprise, a few hurried lines from Bessie McRonald. They were incoherently and strangely expressed, with a fervour of love and gratitude to herself which appeared to be the outpouring of a broken heart as well as of a clouded understanding.

Death itself seemed her only remaining wish, and the sooner the better. "I am utterly—utterly wretched," she wrote in pages slurred and blotted with tears. "I have no one to advise or sympathise with me but Father Eustace, and I begin to doubt whether he is a safe and friendly counsellor. Have I sinned in telling you this? in asking for your sympathy, when before this miserable letter reaches you I shall be beyond the reach of help? I have discovered circumstances relating to you, that gratitude made me wish to tell, and Father Eustace has sworn me to secrecy, yet in case of my betraying them, I am to be shut up in a distant convent, where no mortal can communicate with me, and where all my letters will be examined. I have not a moment in which to tell you all now, or I would. Farewell, Miss Farinelli—a long, long farewell! Oh, if I have sacrificed all my earthly happiness, and am yet mistaken! Nothing was wanted to make me utterly wretched, but a doubt whether I did right in leaving home, and now that doubt has come! At this moment there is a vision before my eyes of what might have been my happy lot—the lovely garden of Daisybank, the cheerful fire-side, the daily prayers, the honoured Bible, the long attached husband, and his kind old father, whom I might have been assisting Robert to nurse! I have been all night in chapel, prostrate on the stone floor, in the form of a cross, repeating my Ave Marias three hundred times, and I thought

the image of St. Bridget stretched its arms toward me at last and smiled; yet strange to say I am not consoled. I dread, above all, the sight of Father Eustace. Must I confess to him this letter? Alas, no! There are home feelings that cannot be uttered even to him; and oh! Miss Farinelli, should you see Robert Carre, tell him there is no sorrow he has ever endured at our being parted that is not multiplied ten thousand times over in my wretched heart. I was supported long by the belief that my advisers were all infallibly right, that my merits were to save myself and Robert—you and all who love me, if I revenged my sins on myself by penances; but circumstances make me doubt Father Eustace now, and yet I am in the meshes of a net from which there is no escape. He comes! Farewell for ever.”

“There shall be an escape for Bessie,” muttered Robert between his teeth, which he ground together with an energy that seemed almost insane, after Beatrice had showed him this letter, full of such inexpressible anguish. “Bessie may never now be mine; there is a soul-dividing barrier between us; but I forgive her all the misery she has caused me, and if the power of man can find out where she is shut up and deliver her from imprisonment, it shall be done. If there be a law on earth that can reach within the walls of a convent, I shall trace out the den into which she has been decoyed, and in

defiance of all human or inhuman efforts to the contrary, release her."

"It is a very generous intention, Robert," said Beatrice kindly; "but be very wary what you say or do when Father Eustace comes in question. He is of a species not yet understood in this country; but if there were a showman qualified to exhibit him in his den, you would hear of habits, feelings, and opinions which it would require the moral courage of a Van Amburgh to defy."

"But I do defy him," said Robert in a low deep voice of concentrated emotion. "Honest straightforward Protestantism may be no match for Popish intrigues and falsehood, backed by superstition and conventual prisons, yet I can but try, and let life itself be the sacrifice rather than I should be a coward."

CHAPTER XI.

“ Oh ! happiness, our being’s end and aim !
Good, pleasure, ease, content, whate’er thy name,—
That something still which prompts the eternal sigh,
For which we bear to live, or dare to die.”

MANY an hour did Lord Iona now agreeably squander in guessing and imagining what were the feelings and thoughts of Beatrice towards himself, or whether she bestowed either upon him at all. That such speaking eyes must be the interpreters of a heart which might be capable of the deepest and truest affection could not be doubted, but that heart might no longer be her own to bestow. She was evidently not one to lavish her attachment on the first man who asked her for it, and Lord Iona, in his own really modest opinion of himself, thought he might perhaps be the very last on whom she would bestow that treasure of unmeasured and immeasurable worth.

It is remarkable how long men may dwell under the same roof with others, and sit at the same table, yet remain alike unknowing and unknown. A veil had fallen from the eyes of Beatrice, and she discovered how completely long absence, long silence, and the consciousness that they were divided in faith and in feeling, had restored her sentiments for Allan to the brother-and-sister

terms of their early days ; but she had not come to the secret of Lord Iona's long-cherished preference, nor to a suspicion that she herself returned it.

Beatrice wandered next day thoughtfully along the river's side gazing at the azure sky, and forming a thousand imaginary images in the drifting clouds, while she sung in a low musing tone the beautiful air of "Bendemere Stream." Occasionally with a feeling of girlish enjoyment she threw a leaf upon the tide as emblematic of some wish, and idly watched in its progress for an omen whether success or failure should be the result ; or she dropped the bright pebbles to observe their descent in the crystal flood ; when most unexpectedly a voice close behind her took up the tune she sung, and made it a duet. Beatrice started, and looking as timidly round as a frightened hare, felt a blush mount to her cheek on observing Lord Iona, fishing-rod in hand, trailing it rapidly along that he might overtake her ; and as soon as he was quite within conversible distance he said, "You seem just in the sort of idle humour that I am myself, Miss Farinelli, when even a man and monkey with a hurdy-gurdy would be a resource ; so let me do my best to divert your ennui."

"Perhaps I have no ennui to be diverted," said Beatrice smiling archly, while the delicate pink on her cheek became a bright carnation. "You are a true quack doctor, pretending to have discovered

a complaint that does not exist, and then offering to cure it."

"Well, then, I shall be a perfect gad-fly, to persecute and torment you for the rest of our walk ; but pray do not play upon my feelings as if they were the notes of your own pianoforte, as they are much out of tune at present, Miss Farinelli. Now tell me whether, if you could look into the depths of my heart as clearly as into that pool, you would do so. No stone could be found at the bottom there."

"No, nor an iron will on the surface, though I remember somebody once saying that he had one," replied Beatrice with a look of merry malice. "You really seem, like this gay stream, to run on through life with sunshine sparkling at the top and shining even to its deepest depths."

"You think me shallow. You think I have no more in me than my mother's educated bullfinches and learned mice. I see that in your eye. It is very ungrateful, when I have such an opinion of your depth that I verily believe you could stand a little-go examination at Oxford."

"Thank you. Since nothing is reckoned so odious by gentlemen as a blue-stocking, who sets up in the knock-me-down-with-cleverness line, I may guess now pretty accurately what position I hold in your estimation. Perhaps, like Portia in the Merchant of Venice, I may yet put on a doctor's gown, or, like Othello, address you as a 'Potent, grave, and reverend signor.'"

“Wait till I am one,” answered Lord Iona, hurriedly snatching up a sprig of lauristinus, which Beatrice had cast upon the stream, and placing it in his button-hole. “By this badge I appoint myself your knight for the day.”

“For one day, that day being more than half over, you may safely encounter all the dangers, difficulties, and fatigues,” replied Beatrice, trying still to preserve the usual bantering tone of their conversation; but she was surprised and somewhat startled at the increasing agitation observable in Lord Iona’s tone and manner. “How I should like on some fine day to see a tournament!”

“And to be yourself the Queen of Beauty, with me for your true knight? I could die for you any day. We all come into the world, you know, to search for the other half of ourselves, and are never happy till it is found. Have I not at last discovered mine? At least I shall never look for any other.”

There was less of jest than of earnest in the tone with which Lord Iona spoke these words, and seeing Beatrice start and colour with astonishment, he added in tones of unaffected sincerity, “You cannot be surprised, Miss Farinelli, even though perhaps annoyed, that I venture to express the respect—the much more than respect, I have felt for you, increasing rapidly from the first moment we met.”

“‘We met—’twas in a crowd!’ and what a

crowd it was that day to meet our Bishop in church!" said Beatrice trying still to turn off the startling earnestness of Lord Iona's manner. "Do you remember so unconsciously telling us that day so much about Sir Allan? and now you have already enlisted me into a plot against him—or rather for his greatest good, though I fear our plan is but a beautiful impossibility."

"Nothing shall be impossible that you and I agree in wishing for. It was a mistake I made in respect to M^cAlpine—my belief that Sir Allan and you were mutually engaged—that delayed so long, so very long, my declaring how I loved you at once and for ever, how entirely you have possession of my whole heart. I could not even attempt now to live without you."

The deep earnestness of Lord Iona's voice formed a strange contrast to his usual tone of reckless vivacity, which made this expression of his feelings the more impressive. Beatrice paused in perfectly bewildered astonishment at this unexpected declaration, and at the tone of impassioned eloquence in which it was made. She trembled with agitation, perhaps with a certain degree of pleasure, but could no more have spoken than a Greek statue, while Lord Iona continued to speak in a yet more earnest tone, as if afraid of being unfavourably answered, if answered at all.

"Why look so astonished, so absolutely shocked? Never from the first moment have I attempted to

conceal my unbounded devotion to you," added Lord Iona in a high-flown style of eloquence; but seeing the almost incredulous amazement depicted in the beautiful eyes of Beatrice, turned for a moment full upon him with inexpressible wonder, he added, "I can no longer hide my actual frenzy, for it is beyond my control, and why should it be controlled? If I can be happy enough to gain your favour, life itself would be too short for my gratitude and happiness; if not, life has no more to interest me, my game is played, my best stake lost, and I throw up the cards."

Beatrice attempted to speak, but the words died away inaudibly on her lips, which merely quivered for a moment in a vain attempt to articulate; but Lord Iona hurriedly continued, in a low tone subdued by emotion—"Give me no answer now. Make no tremendous and irrevocable vows against me at present, but let us have a few bright moments of hope and happiness here together. Let me recommend myself to your favour by weeks, or by months if you will, of devoted assiduity. All your most inconvenient, or even impossible wishes shall be fulfilled. My love shall be worthy of yourself—not the common-place feeling of a common mind. It is pure, lasting, and warm as that glorious sun now blazing so brightly on us both. May our hearts, like its rays, be soon blended into one!"

They walked on slowly together for several

minutes, both too much agitated to speak, for Beatrice was not only amazed, and, truth to say, gratified, but almost intimidated at the impassioned eloquence of Lord Iona's tone and manner. At length with an effort she found voice to say, "For your own sake, Lord Iona, try to hate rather than to love me, but at all events to forget me. We can never be more to each other than we are."

"Why? Tell me why. I would give a whole hecatomb of worlds to gain your affection. Is it then true that Sir Allan won the treasure of your first love, and now, though almost under vows as a Jesuit Priest, still keeps his hold over you?" exclaimed Lord Iona, in a tone of reckless despair; and then added, his voice low and sad, "Give me even hope deferred, for if that makes my heart sick, what would hope utterly destroyed be! Say not that you love M^cAlpine! His spirits are never above half-mast high. He is a dull horse now that shall not win the race. Can it be for his sake that I am rejected?—that I am to be snuffed out and extinguished at once? Impossible!"

"No, Lord Iona! The same answer awaits all who love me as you do. With a nameless being like myself, neither you nor any one should wish for an alliance, and I never will degrade any family by entering it, till I know by what name I am about to do so. I feel often like an impostor in society, for what title have I to be in any? I, who am worse off than the most desolate orphan,

for an orphan would at least know where to look for the tombs of her own parents."

Tears coursed each other down the cheek of Beatrice, which had become crimson with emotion, and she added in a tone of the deepest earnestness,—"I have no right to your good opinion, and never expected to obtain it. I am nobody—less than nobody! What could make you ever dream of me? It never till this moment entered my head that you could care for me seriously. We are so totally unsuited. It agitates me almost to death! I know how generous it is in you to overlook all the many barriers that ought to divide us, but"—

"Never mind barriers! I like a steeple-hunt over difficulties, the more the better," said Lord Iona, in a tone of obstinate resignation, and with a momentary relapse into his usual vivacity. "I am not, like Sir Allan, gifted with the power of change, and in every difficulty the gates all open at my approach. If you had all Burke's Peerage for relations, and the mines of Golconda, with California besides, for a portion, that would make no difference to me. I went to my father this morning, like a dutiful son, to state my case, and ask his consent; I seem scarcely in my sober senses to-day, if I ever have a sense that can be called sober. Quite beyond my hopes, Lord Eagles-cairn gave his consent as cordially, heartily, joyfully, as if your pedigree had been measured on twenty pages of Debrett. He made only one stipulation"—

“My religion,” said Beatrice, seeing him hesitate; “of course, Lord Iona, I am as unsuited to your family in creed as in birth! No, I differ from your relations in all the hopes and fears of existence, in our sorrows and consolations, in every thought and feeling, therefore even death itself could scarcely render it more impossible that we should be united. It can never—never be!”

“You fire off a perfect arsenal of objections, but only say the impossibility does not arise from your own aversion to me—that your heart is not finally bricked up against me, and I shall acknowledge no other impediment,” said Lord Iona eagerly. “Father Eustace, the Cardinal of Clanmarina, would, if he could, make Lord Eaglescairn cut me off with a bad shilling, but my father, strange to say, merely stipulated that I should conceal my wishes from his confessor, who has some strange hold over him, quite unaccountable to me, and would not allow of my marriage to a heretic, as he is pleased to call you. Pius the Sixth said the greatest of sins is to be a heretic, and the next greatest, to favour one; so my honoured parent has really stretched a point on this occasion. Think of the bondage my father must be in, to imagine that I would submit, for half a moment, to the interference in such an affair of that priest, of whose tyranny my father himself is evidently very tired, though very much afraid!”

“No wonder,” said Beatrice, “if, according to the strange unjustifiable commands of Loyola, Lord

Eaglescairn is obliged to obey Father Eustace, as a stick in the hands of a man who walks with it,—if he must extinguish conscience itself when commanded.”

“Well! I am no Telemachus to such a Mentor as Father Eustace. Neither am I that frivolous butterfly of the hour that you may naturally think me, Miss Farinelli, for I jest sometimes when on the verge of distraction. I have a thousand convincing reasons to give, why I deserve your better opinion. Let me then live on the thinnest diet of hope. Even if you despise my love, tell me at least that you believe in it!” said Lord Iona, his utterance becoming quick and earnest, as the expressions of one pouring forth the emotions of an excited and fervent heart, while Beatrice listened with blushing agitation. His eyes flashed, and there was the stamp of a powerful mind in every feature of his handsome countenance, beaming with intellect and sensibility, through the strange mixture in his manner of levity and seriousness. “Be mine, and your every wish, before it be spoken, I shall fulfil, — not a sorrow shall reach you till it has pierced my own heart. Say not a word now, lest it be a negative; but only let my bondage to you continue, for that bondage is my delight. Like any lover in an old play, I must sigh, read poetry, look pale, eat nothing, and remain on my knees here for ever, if that would not weary you; but you evidently do not

appreciate my merits. As love, like hay, comes up at first full of thistles, only let me wait (patiently, or impatiently, I do not say which) till your own mind is deliberately made up, whether you can ever do a wiser thing, than to accept the most devoted of your admirers. Only consider how very singular you would be in not liking me! Why, the very dogs in the street cease to bark when they observe my approach, and I have a spare corner in every heart that knows me, but your own."

"Mine is barred by circumstances against all but friendship," said Beatrice in a low timid voice. "If you will accept every grateful feeling of regard on my part, Lord Iona, that is all I have to offer those who generously interest themselves in a nameless orphan. I hope hereafter to witness your happiness"—

"You shall witness none that you do not create and share," exclaimed Lord Iona vehemently; "mere good wishes would be a very stale crumb of comfort to me now. All you can say about my happiness is a mere clap-trap speech, if at the same time you intend consigning me to hopeless wretchedness. You threaten me with encountering impossibilities, but only say you have the will, and I shall soon find the way to end all impediments; and meanwhile, so long as you remain another hour without forbidding me to hope, that hour is a gain. I could as soon imagine a colour unknown to the

rainbow as any happiness without you, yet you leave me in such a gloomy suspense in the meantime that I shall scarcely be able even to bear the society of my own dog."

Hearing a footstep close to them, Lord Iona and Beatrice turned hastily round and discovered Father Eustace a step or two behind, his eyes as usual on the ground, his hands folded together, his whole countenance as destitute of expression as if he had been one of his own wooden images which had been endowed with a power of locomotion. He slightly bowed when Lord Iona made way for him to pass on, while the young man turned contemptuously away from the silent priest to Beatrice, saying in a lively tone, "When you and I become partners he will lose the rubber. If anything could add to the happiness of gaining you, it would be the frustration of Father Eustace's wishes. Now pray do not look a negative as you are doing with that beautiful but obstinate smile. It makes me wretched, and I am like Molière's *Malade imaginaire*—'The physicians have ordered me never to be contradicted.' Nothing is so hard to bear as an unanswered heart, and nothing is so unbecoming to you as that grave forbidding look. You would be a perfect mill-stone to reject me. Yet if it be true that a man must be superior to a woman before she can love him, I must despair of ever gaining Beatrice Farinelli.

" 'What care I how fair she be,
If she be not fair to me?' "

CHAPTER XII.

"I cannot tell how the truth may be,
I say the tale as 'twas said to me."—SCOTT.

THE battle of the approaching election had now grown "fast and furious." Dinners were eaten, speeches delivered, and toasts drunk to the most enraptured cheers by all who had no votes; but the farmers and freeholders stood firmly aloof, and when the Popish factor from Eaglescairn attempted to address the electors on behalf of Sir Allan, there were only ironical cries of "Hear!" "Hear!" drowned by coughing, hissing, and tumultuous cries of "Chair!" A more noisy assembly was never called to order, and never more unsuccessfully. Some fell out, and some fell under the table; there were broken heads and broken promises; but though the Eaglescairn committee could get a show of very unwashed hands to any amount, there was much cry and little wool, as the voters themselves remained obstinately sober and unpledged. The factor was quite pathetic in his expressions of friendship and regard for Mr. Carre and his son,—it might have drawn tears from any

eyes to hear how highly he estimated them both ; but there never was a deafer ear than that which Robert Carre turned to the complaisant agent of Lord Eaglescairn.

Beatrice Farinelli had been endowed by nature with a lively imagination, and there was moreover no small tinge of romance in her disposition, both of which tendencies were excited to the highest degree of activity by her present circumstances. The attachment of Sir Allan, so long apparently dormant, had seemed, ever since she considered him so changed, a mere boyish partiality, which she believed herself conscientiously bound never fully to reciprocate, therefore she had carefully guarded her own feelings lest they should exceed towards him that true sisterly affection to which she believed that they ought to be limited, and to which she had little difficulty in restoring them. It was otherwise in respect to Lord Iona. The depth and power of his attachment to herself had taken Beatrice completely by surprise, and caused her a perfectly new feeling of, truth to say, delightful embarrassment. His whole manner and character were piquant and original ; nothing that he ever said or did resembled anybody but himself ; none of his ideas were common, like an old tune set to a barrel-organ ; but even in expressing the depth and sincerity of his love it was done as no one else would have done it, and Beatrice, agitated as she was, could not but smile at the

recollection. In his graver mood, however, Lord Iona had touched a chord in the heart of Beatrice, which seemed for the first time in her life to vibrate, revealing an hitherto undeveloped faculty of love, such as her young heart had never before experienced. With Allan, the habitual companion of her juvenile years, there had been every sentiment of partiality and friendship; but Allan had long ceased to be considered by Beatrice as entitled to the whole world of her affections, to be the polar star of her existence. Amidst the silence and mystery of night Beatrice communed with her own thoughts, and while telling herself a thousand times over that she must walk alone through the long valley of life, still the bright countenance of Lord Iona, glittering with vivacity, or subdued as she had lately seen it by sensibility, forced itself into companionship with all the hopes and fears which seemed to beset her future path along the vista of life, and it was impossible not to feel what an existence hers might be under the sunshine of such an attachment as his. Like other girls, Beatrice had often dreamed over an imaginary declaration of devoted love, and now her own heart whispered that none but a mere automaton could have remained insensible to the disinterested and generous preference of such a man as Lord Iona. She was touched by the noble frankness with which he had, in half-spoken accents, hurriedly but energetically declared it, and as there

is to the labyrinth of every human heart some infallible clue, that of Beatrice had certainly been discovered at last.

Had Lord Iona been son and heir to Croesus as well as heir to one of the proudest coronets in Scotland, that would have only seemed an additional barrier between them, but great was the surprise of Beatrice, mingled with some rather uneasy curiosity on the subject, to find that Lord Eaglescairn entertained such treasonable thoughts against the arbitrary will of Father Eustace as to dream of encouraging Lord Iona's attachment to herself without his sanction, or rather contrary to his wishes. She rubbed her eyes to ascertain that she really was now wide awake, and really at Eaglescairn Castle, having thought that Lord Eaglescairn would rather have stood in the way of an express train than withstood to the face, on any pretext, the decree on any matter, public or domestic, of that name, now in connexion with Sir Allan's perversion so dismally familiar to her thoughts, "Father Eustace."

Beatrice at once told every thought of her heart to Lady Edith, who seemed to grow young again under the influence of that affectionate interest with which she listened to all the acknowledgments of her adopted child; endeared to her more and more every day by the unbounded confidence which subsisted between them; not a secret having ever for a moment divided their minds. It was with

great astonishment, therefore, and with long continued incredulity, that Lady Edith was soon after this led to suspect that her own beloved Beatrice had at length some concealment from her, and that her mind had become suddenly preoccupied on some subject which she was evidently anxious to avoid mentioning. Once or twice, Lady Edith, when she entered the room unexpectedly, found Beatrice intently brooding over papers which she hastily huddled into a drawer; while, with greatly heightened colour, she hurriedly spoke on any subject apparently the farthest from that with which her mind was entirely preoccupied. Lady Edith had an entire trust in her much-loved Beatrice; and though surrounded by those who were opposed to her in faith and feeling, she never for a single instant doubted the loyalty of attachment with which Beatrice would ever remain devoted to the religion and to the affections of her own home. Still, though Lady Edith, with all the delicacy of a refined and high-born disposition, refrained from the most distant hint that her young *protégée* had become unaccountably absent and thoughtful, she inwardly felt a deep increasing solicitude, raised by degrees to the utmost endurable pitch, when plainly perceiving that the dear girl had obviously some hidden anxiety within her heart of hearts, not to be alluded to:—while avoiding all that really interested her, she, in a tone of the strictest confidence and the deepest mystery, consulted

Lady Edith which picture in the gallery was thought the finest painting, and whether Lady Anne's new song suited her soprano voice. There had evidently arisen a small dark closet in the mind of Beatrice now, that Lady Edith was not to enter; and most anxiously did that kindest of friends await the time when her motherly anxiety should be relieved by a clear explanation of the mystery which had suddenly stood up like a wall between them;—but it came not.

In most country houses, the hostess good-humouredly assumes to herself the patronage of arranging at breakfast a programme for the amusements of the day,—who shall go in her chariot after luncheon to the old ruined abbey in one direction, who shall climb up the wet slippery path in a distant glen to admire the celebrated cascade, and who shall undertake a day's shopping in the neighbouring country town with herself.

Lady Eaglescairn had a polite but peremptory habit of thus settling every visitor's plans for the day, and always began with overturning whatever project any one else had formed for himself. With a benevolent tyranny, which called itself a friendly interest in the diversion of her guests, every one must be amused in her way and in that only. There was no escape! The guests most difficult to please were always those to whom her chief interest was directed; for there is in all houses a premium on discontent, so that those who are known to

be fastidious become objects of assiduous attention, but those who are known to be easily satisfied are left to their good-humoured insignificance. Lady Eaglescairn, dressed like a peacock, so gorgeous was the variety of her colours, stepped every day with a smile of almost royal condescension into her barouche and four, which was decorated inside and outside with a shower of coronets on the lace, the hammer-cloth, and the trappings. The postilions and outriders appeared in all the rainbow magnificence of their gaudy liveries—yellow faced with blue—and two powdered servants, quite up to London pitch in their height, in the length of their gold-headed sticks, and in the precise angle at which they poised those sticks on the roof of the carriage, ushered into this exceedingly dignified equipage the very select few invited to accompany Lady Eaglescairn herself. Among those marked out for this ineffable distinction Beatrice was invariably one, and almost as constantly the party became completed by the addition of Mr. Clinton and Father Eustace. They kept up the conversation incessantly, and had often dived so deeply into subjects of interesting discussion, that the two clergymen were afterwards invited along with Beatrice, who listened always in silence, to finish the argument by accompanying Lady Eaglescairn to her private sitting-room.

Lady Eaglescairn patronisingly called Beatrice “A perfect dot; a darling!” and gave her other terms

of condescending endearment; but still Beatrice could not for her very life feel comfortable, happy, or at ease under such a flood of supernatural civilities. She perceived that Lady Eaglescairn's delight was always to patronise some one favoured individual to the exclusion of all others. If she could make one selected personage happy and every other in the room miserable, it would have delighted her to exercise so much power. If there were but two in the room of equal merit and of equal importance, one was invariably left out, while Lady Eaglescairn sat in a corner whispering to the other with well-acted vivacity, assuming an air of astonishment or amusement, to raise the curiosity of those unfortunate enough to be excluded, and Beatrice found herself promoted now to be "the Cynthia of the minute."

Amidst a cluster of splendid equipages, regularly every day grouped round the castle gate after luncheon to take everybody everywhere, there was one specially appointed for Lady Edith and Mrs Clinton. It was a low, small, old-fashioned pony-carriage, drawn by what seemed the father of all ponies, shaggy and shattered looking. Even the well-bred servants scarcely restrained a titter, when watching the stiff slow pace at which this respectable quadruped felt disposed to move. Lady Edith, however, looked in no degree disconcerted, but with her usual quiet grace placed herself in the humble conveyance appointed for her use, and

when exchanging a sly glance with Beatrice, her smile was the same intellectual, benignant smile as ever. Beatrice thought it like sun-light on a beautiful ruin, yet sometimes when for a moment the pale cheek of Lady Edith became suffused with colour, and the dimmed eye brightened with transient vivacity, her smile resembled that of a seraph :—

“ No duty shunn'd, no sacrifice unpaid,
To social good.”

Lady Edith, who often said that neither music nor painting ever afforded her more delight than architecture, had wandered one morning meditatively round the beautiful little structure of St. Bridget's Chapel, admiring with enlightened taste its light and airy symmetry, when she suddenly observed a low massy door like that of a prison standing ajar, and believing that it led into the vestry, she gently pushed it open and quietly stole in. To her extreme surprise, Lady Edith found herself in a cell, precisely realizing her conception of one in La Trappe. The floor, like the ceiling, was of rough unhewn stone, a wooden bench evidently intended as a couch to sleep on stood beside a rustic table, on which lay something that seemed intended for bread, though black and hard as a piece of coal. An earthen jar of water stood beside it, the contents purposely rendered nauseous by a mixture of bitter herbs, and a gaudily deco-

rated missal lay open on the table, beside a crucifix of stucco, and a rosary of amber beads. In a distant corner appeared a large image dressed in blue satin and gold, meant apparently to represent St. Bridget herself, and before this idol, full length on the floor, lay motionless as death a female form, which Lady Edith did not at once discover to be that of a living being. While she stood transfixed to the spot for several minutes with wonder and curiosity, she became startled by hearing a rapid muttering sound from the recumbent figure, as if the same words were repeated in frantic haste over and over and over again with ceaseless perseverance. The vain repetitions seemed to go on without end, and when Lady Edith, who almost expected to see the black face of a Hindoo worshipper, obtained at last a momentary glimpse of the stranger's features, it was a sight she never to her latest hour forgot. A countenance so emaciated, so expressive of utter, hopeless wretchedness she had never hitherto beheld, yet there was something silly and almost idiotic in the eye, painful to look on. The recluse's hands were as soiled and dirty as a housemaid's gloves for mending the fire; and the dress, like that of a corpse, added to the mournful effect of that woe-begone face. A fold of linen was round the stranger's forehead, and a drapery of white cloth, tightly pinned round her face, hung disconsolately down to her very feet, so as almost to cover her black serge gown. A scourge lay beside her, as

well as the stucco crucifix, the finely decorated missal, and the rosary of amber beads.

Never could Lady Edith witness any human sorrow without an earnest desire to relieve it, and never had she seen any before, without a consoling certainty that her sympathy would be acceptable. Here, however, a wide gulf of difference divided her from this object of her heartfelt commiseration, and though anxiously desirous to offer the sufferer some comfort, she felt as if her only duty now might be to withdraw in silence. Lady Edith hesitated another moment, and advanced another step, but paused again, and before she could decide what to do, the stranger, either not observing her or not choosing to observe her, had vanished through a low gate that seemed as if it led into the vaults beneath. Long long afterwards, the memory of Lady Edith was haunted by that face of indescribable misery, and by the sort of dim idea which sometimes unaccountably besets people, that in some far off period of almost forgotten existence, she had seen that corpse-like countenance before.

“Where will 't all end? In madness or the grave?
No limbs can stand these drudgeries; no spirit
The fretting harrow which this ruffian priest
Calls education.”

Long and deeply did Lady Edith meditate on the strangely secret and mysterious religion which was now being acted out in its fullest perfection around her:—the frantic efforts to gain over con-

verts made by those who expected to escape a few centuries of purgatory for every proselyte,—the fantastic austerities, the picturesque dresses, the attitudes of prostration, the spiritual pride, the want of truth, the abandonment of every natural duty, the contempt for every simple pleasure, and, in short, the masquerade of life in which those she now associated with spoke and acted always artificially. There is in the natural mind of man a delight in mystery, and here it was to be found even in trifles. The only person in the Eaglescairn family to be thoroughly understood was Lord Iona; and Lady Edith smiled when she thought of his eccentric, amusing, mock-modest, whimsical, sublime and absurd, but perfectly open-hearted conversation, while she could not but observe the rapidly increasing earnestness of his endeavours to please Beatrice. All the assiduous attention of all the party at Eaglescairn to her beautiful *protégée* had made no change in the unaffected simplicity of Beatrice's manner, or in the devoted affection she testified, with if possible more respectful gratitude than ever, to her kind benefactress, who felt conscious that it required no small degree of moral courage, as well as of right feeling, to testify, as she invariably did, her unshaken allegiance to the wishes and feelings of her adopted mother. Few mothers, indeed, receive from their own daughters in society so heartfelt an homage of affectionate consideration as Beatrice delighted to show towards her own best of friends.

Still there had arisen, within these few days, a certain, but indescribable change in the expression of Beatrice's countenance, and while Lady Edith's elevated mind was incapable of being tortured by idle curiosity, she could not but observe that the lovely young face had become pale, and that the voice, usually cheerful as the song of a bird in spring, was recently subdued almost to sadness. Lady Edith, always observant, was not likely to overlook anything affecting the happiness of her own incomparable Beatrice, whose manner to herself seemed to become even more devotedly affectionate, in proportion as her confidence appeared so unaccountably withheld. Lady Edith on her return home one day found Beatrice pensively seated with her work beside the fire, which threw a deep red glare over every object, and it could not be doubted that there were traces of tears on the young girl's cheek, which was ghastly pale, while her fingers trembled visibly as she attempted to continue her occupation. When Lady Edith made her presence known by gently breaking the deep silence that reigned in the room, Beatrice visibly started as from a dream, she coloured deeply, and while evidently trying to shun observation, she yet hurriedly rose, and with almost solemn affection, which had in it a sort of mysterious charm, kissed her benefactress, then sitting down by her side, continued with a shaking hand and with nervous haste to work, while her face looked flushed and anxious.

“ Beatrice, what is the matter ? ” asked Lady Edith in a tone of calm, deep, earnest affection ; and then, seeing her young companion looking first to the right and then to the left, with heightened colour, and in evident perplexity how to avoid answering, Lady Edith added in a low tone of concentrated emotion, “ I can trust you entirely, Beatrice. If anything must be concealed from me, I am sure it is not on your part willingly,—but my dear child, be very wary whom you confide in here. No one knows better than yourself what ambuscades and manœuvres are considered praiseworthy, to kidnap a convert in this house, therefore I would gladly have given you my sympathy and support in any perplexities that may have arisen here. What they are, I cannot conjecture ; but promise me you will take no step of importance without my knowledge.”

“ And consent,” added Beatrice, eagerly. “ Dear Lady Edith ! if you could but know how gradually I have been led on since we came here into perplexities, quite inexplicable at present !—I was wrong to be hurried into any promise ; but who could have escaped or evaded the snare ? If it involved in the remotest degree my principles or affectionate gratitude to you, then indeed I should have asserted my liberty, but—”

“ Beatrice ! there is nothing selfish in my curiosity, therefore now, since you have convinced me that no danger threatens your own faith, I shall

calmly await the time when you can follow the dictates of your kind spirit by restoring our confidence to its former uninterrupted state. My own heart is like the dried up bed of a torrent, empty and desolate, but for that spring of cheerfulness derived from the happiness of my adopted child. I have lived to witness the prostration of every other earthly hope,—let me then trust that your present anxieties are but a light and temporary cloud.”

Beatrice fervently embraced Lady Edith, who was startled to feel the hot tears pouring in torrents from those eyes, the smiling brightness of which had hitherto been her delight to look upon, and the small, white, transparent hand trembled as she held it in her own.

“Why is this?” asked Lady Edith, in a tone of almost commanding interest, but immediately retracting the expression of her anxiety she hurriedly added, “No, Beatrice! I am wrong; I promised to trust you, and I do.”

Lady Edith, as if afraid to rely on her own fortitude, hurried out of the room, and Beatrice, throwing herself on the sofa, burst into an agony of weeping. It was no ordinary distress that could so greatly move the well-regulated mind of Beatrice, but she was indeed plunged into the deep waters of a conflict in which it was painfully difficult to see her way, though firm as a rock in all that related to her principles and affections.

Lady Edith having accidentally returned next

morning earlier than usual, without executing the whole programme mapped out for her by Lady Eaglescairn, set out to enjoy the bright, glittering sunshine of a winter day, by strolling alone in the magnificent gardens, where no labour or expense had been spared to keep up a continual succession of plants to decorate the chapel. When about to enter the gate, Lady Edith's eyes were suddenly attracted by a sight which filled her with astonishment and dismay. Glancing along a dark, silent shrubbery walk, not usually frequented, she observed the gigantic angular figure of Mr. Ambrose, looming in tall and gloomy mystery at a distance. He was walking slowly along, hanging his head down, in obviously very deep conference, and by his side, there could be not one moment's doubt, that in most confidential conversation was Beatrice. Mr. Ambrose seemed speaking with a vehemence perfectly startling, and his gesticulation became more and more energetic, while Beatrice, with her handkerchief held to her eyes as if weeping, shrunk evidently with timidity, and yet seemed as if unable to escape listening.

Lady Edith hesitated for a short moment what to do, but her characteristic was to be always frank and above-board; therefore, though resolved never to force the confidence of Beatrice, she nevertheless determined to alter her course, and at least to interrupt this uncommon interview.

So intent were both Beatrice and Father

Ambrose on whatever they were saying, that neither saw Lady Edith till she had advanced close to the *tête à tête*, and smilingly held out her hand to her adopted child, who fervently clasped it, but changed colour vividly, even painfully ; and though there was a smile of affection in her bright dark eyes they had evidently been dimmed by recent tears. The first impulse of Beatrice was to receive her kind benefactress with an exclamation of joyous astonishment, the next to turn away with a look of inexpressible distress, and burying her hands and face in the clustering ringlets of her dark brown hair, to burst into an agony of weeping, which it was evidently out of her power to control.

Mr. Ambrose stood calmly looking on. His remarkable eyes seemed vacantly fixed on the garden wall. He might have been counting the bricks, but his look hardly expressed intelligence enough for that. Nothing ever surprised or agitated him, and from his cold, polite, matter-of-course reception of Lady Edith, it might have appeared as if he knew an hour before that she was coming, and that it was impossible she should not have appeared at the very moment, and at the very spot that she did.

As Lady Edith approached, Mr. Ambrose had uttered a deep sepulchral “ Hem ! ” and gazed earnestly at Beatrice till he caught her eye, while in his own there was an expression both of warning and admonition. He once more glanced at

Beatrice as if to remind her of something in which they had a mutual understanding, and then assuming a careless off-hand look, said to Lady Edith, "I am in luck this morning as to accidental rencontres—"

"With Lady Edith your meeting is accidental, Mr. Ambrose," said Beatrice, her countenance in a glow of indignant crimson at the false impression he evidently meant to convey: "but we met by appointment."

"I did not say otherwise, Miss Farinelli!" replied Mr. Ambrose, with a look of appalling dignity at Beatrice, who stood tremblingly and tearfully silent. "But our little tryste was about nothing of any particular importance—nothing."

"It must have been something rather peculiar that could agitate my Beatrice, as I see her now," replied Lady Edith, steadily fixing her eye on the truthful countenance of her adopted child, which had become pale with emotion. "Whatever may be concealed from me is, I am certain, without her consent, but all I see makes me resolve as soon as possible to take her to our own quiet home."

"You need have no fears! She is a very stout theologian," replied Father Ambrose, with a rather irritated laugh; then added in an under tone of bitter malignity, "As soon as possible may not be so soon as you expect! You are naturally surprised, Lady Edith, to find Miss Farinelli somewhat agitated, but I was relating a most singular

story, in which she felt deeply interested. Were you not, Miss Farinelli?"

"Inexpressibly so," replied Beatrice, impetuously clenching her small white hands together, while fresh tears sprung into her eyes, and poured down her glowing cheeks. "Oh! tell me more. Tell me all."

"Not under a thousand and one nights!" replied Mr. Ambrose, slightly shrugging his shoulders: then with another cautionary glance to Miss Farinelli, which seemed both to threaten and command her, he hastily disappeared into the thickest groves of the deer forest. Beatrice lowered her eyes in painful confusion when thus left alone with Lady Edith; her breathing was fluttered like that of a captured bird, but it was evident she dared not trust herself to speak. Tears fell gently over her face like the dropping of an evening shower, while she walked on evidently overwhelmed with perplexity beside Lady Edith, who looked thoughtful, melancholy, and perplexed.

"Beatrice," said she at last, affectionately leaning on the arm of her beloved *protégée*;" "Tell me, have I done wrong in venturing to bring you here? How has that artful man been tampering with your feelings? Does he pretend to know the history of your origin? Explain to your old friend why that young face is now blistered with such tears as through life I never saw you shed before. Speak to me, my own dear Beatrice, — what can a

stranger have said to cause such agitation as I see now?"

There was a pin-drop silence of some moments, while Beatrice, with a quick impulsive emotion, throwing herself into the arms of Lady Edith, wept convulsively, but could not articulate. It seemed a strong burst of passionate grief, as hopeless as it was bitter. Instead of becoming more composed, the young girl's agitation visibly increased, until Lady Edith gazed with apprehensive astonishment at the pale countenance of her much loved *protégée*, convulsed with sorrow that she seemed unable to control, and yet more unable to explain.

"My dear child! my own Beatrice!" exclaimed Lady Edith with mournful earnestness, "we seem in a painful dream! I reproach myself for having brought you here. It was well meant, but rash. There is a blight on the happiness of all who come within the reach of a cruel superstition. No one should be exposed to such an ordeal! I was tempted by the vain hope of regaining my place in the confidence of one dear old pupil. Must I fear to lose both?"

"No! no! dearest Aunt Edith! I shall die first," replied Beatrice, hiding her face on the shoulder of her benefactress, and rivetting her arms around her neck with the ardent affection of a child; "I am bewildered, and scarcely know what I may answer. More than life I owe to you, and nothing—oh, nothing ever shall part us! Let

your dear mind be at rest about my faith,—that under your teaching has been grounded on too clear a foundation ever to be shaken, or in the slightest degree disturbed,—but—but—oh, Aunt Edith, my best of friends,—I am under a dreadful necessity,—under a solemn promise to give you no hint of what is the weight now oppressing my heart. It is nothing wrong,—nothing even doubtfully right,—nothing relating to my religion,—at least not directly, but—”

Beatrice stammered, hesitated, coloured deeply, and paused, while Lady Edith’s eyes remained fixed upon her with affectionate earnestness, expressive of deep anxiety, and after a moment’s reflection, she said—

“ My very dear girl! I shall believe nothing unpleasant so long as it can be avoided. Let us now return to our own peaceful home. Let us forget all this, and be happy as we were before in our own simple faith and single-hearted occupations. Yes, Beatrice, let us return home to-morrow.”

“ I cannot,—I dare not,” replied Beatrice, with a deep gasp for breath, and in a low whisper, which became, from extreme agitation, almost inaudible. “ Oh, Aunt Edith! it is not in my power now to return to our dear home, any more than it is in my power to return to the careless ease of my happy childhood. I cannot!”

“ You cannot, Beatrice! what am I to think?

What can this mean?" exclaimed Lady Edith, becoming most seriously alarmed. "Who has acquired any right thus to influence you—to plant a barrier between us—to raise any secret that shall alienate your confidence from the only remaining friend of your early youth? There must be something wrong! If they are beguiling you with any romantic history of your origin, be very sure of its truth before you are led to act. Whatever befalls, however, I shall take you home to-morrow."

Beatrice wept so convulsively that her answer was almost inaudible, yet Lady Edith with difficulty gathered that she spoke a negative, and exclaimed in accents of agitated astonishment, "If I go home to-morrow, Beatrice, surely you do not refuse to accompany me!"

"I cannot go!" sobbed Beatrice, clasping Lady Edith more closely in her arms. "Oh! why can I not tell you all?"

Lady Edith stood transfixed to the spot with grief and consternation, becoming as white as a wall, while her eyes became affectionately but most mournfully fixed on the weeping girl. Lady Edith's lip was compressed, and her whole frame quivered with emotion, but words seemed denied her, and she could but gaze on Beatrice struggling under a burst of anguish, such as Lady Edith, in the long course of a sorrowful life, had never witnessed in any one before. A few dismal moments

elapsed in mournful silence, and then, every other feeling swallowed up in affectionate compassion, Lady Edith again clasped Beatrice fondly to her heart, saying,

“ Whatever it be, my own dear child, you are not, I am sure, to blame. Oh! why did I bring you here? Young, unsophisticated, and I fear, greatly too credulous, they are agitating you with some delusive fable, and if miracles be necessary to confirm it, these will not be wanting! It must be some imposition, dear Beatrice, that cannot bear the light of day. Why such secrecy enjoined from one who has no earthly interest but yours—nothing to live for but you?”

Lady Edith at this moment felt Beatrice lean more heavily on her shoulder,—the next moment she lay prostrate and insensible at her feet. Never had Beatrice fainted before! Now her aspect was perfectly deathlike, and the time seemed to Lady Edith endless, during which every means she could think of had been tried in vain to bring back life and consciousness. All proved totally unavailing, for no corpse could have looked more cold, still, and insensible.

“ Beatrice! my own Beatrice! they shall not part us!” exclaimed Lady Edith, in a voice of such piercing anguish that it might almost have awakened the dead, while stooping over the pale young face she kissed her cold cheek, chafed her temples, and rubbed her hands. Still she moved

not, till suddenly life and consciousness became at once restored, and she sat up looking wildly but earnestly round, exclaiming, "A mother did you say? Where, where!" Checking herself suddenly, the next moment she covered her face with her hands and burst into tears.

So deeply were Lady Edith and Beatrice occupied with each other that they continued quite unconscious of a light step approaching on the turf, till Lord Iona stood close beside them, his intelligent eye fixed on the agitated group, and his whole countenance expressive of indignant sympathy.

"I guess all!" he exclaimed with friendly interest, and shaking his riding-whip relentlessly after the retreating figure of Mr. Ambrose; "my mother and Father Eustace have held several cabinet councils lately, which is a sure sign that they think somebody or another too happy for this world. Father Eustace is, like Mother Carey's chickens, the sure precursor to a storm. What mischief have they done you? Tell me, Miss Farinelli. My mother should conceal nothing from so dutiful a son; but her great delight is in little mysteries. If her poodle is going to be washed it is a secret. I have often promised solemnly not to tell a million of trifles that no mortal on earth would care to hear! Miss Farinelli, it makes me wretched to see you unhappy; say something—say anything—but do relieve my suspense. Has

my mother a share in your distress? for if she has, there is no well so deep from which I shall not bring up the truth."

"I am very peculiarly circumstanced!" stammered Beatrice, while her countenance assumed a glow of modest embarrassment at the fervent earnestness of tone and look with which Lord Iona thus offered her his services. "The only duty that I plainly see before me is, to say nothing. No one values more than I do the kindness of such dear friends, but the only proof of gratitude must be withheld. I dare not say why my mind is so agitated."

"There! I knew it!" exclaimed Lord Iona, almost pleased to have his suspicions confirmed. "There has been some Popish plot hatching for the last week; but the invisible Guy Fawkes shall be detected! You think it possible to conceal a secret from me, but no hound on a scent can track one out better. When your happiness is concerned, Miss Farinelli, I shall not be idle—"

"It is not the trifle you think," interrupted Beatrice, touched and gratified by the honest, open-hearted desire of Lord Iona to serve her. "Many interests are deeply at stake! Yours—mine—"

"Let but our interests be united, and I care not for the consequences!" exclaimed Lord Iona, taking Beatrice's hand, which trembled with agitation, but for the first time she did not withdraw it.

At this moment Sir Allan advanced with a hurried step along the path; but when he saw the look of earnest interest with which Lord Iona was speaking to Beatrice, he hastily turned away, slouched his hat over his temples, and disappeared with a sudden gesture of mute despair.

“Father Eustace has a genius for intrigues that should have placed him above Metternich or Talleyrand,” observed Lord Iona, totally unconscious of Sir Allan’s momentary appearance; “but here he has a very insufficient scope for his talent. He must feel like a forest-tree in a flower-pot. The influence he exercises over his victims in this house, especially over my father, is marvellous. When any one does wrong at a priest’s instigation, I always think of that rascally little puppet Punch, whose crimes are all instigated by the invisible director behind a curtain below; and the game of life in our own castle is carried on as in a Marionette theatre, the strings and pullies guided by Father Eustace! I wish he guided them better.”

Lord Iona gave a most vindictive cough as he concluded this philippic against the obnoxious confessor, and his animation seemed to take effect in one respect, that it revived Beatrice by diverting her thoughts from the subjects which too deeply engrossed them. With the buoyancy of girlhood she smilingly listened to Lord Iona’s tirade, yet there was a burning hectic on her cheek, and a

dazzling lustre in her eye which startled Lady Edith, and before night Beatrice was dangerously ill of a nervous fever, brought on evidently, the doctor said, by some secret anxiety and distress of mind.

It was evident, Dr. M^cIndre said, that Miss Farinelli had met with some sudden shock occasioning her great mental excitement, and therefore the most intense quietness of mind and body were absolutely essential to give any hope of her recovery. This Lady Edith did her utmost to secure, by herself sitting calmly and alone beside the bed of her own Beatrice; yet if for a single hour she left her charge, it always seemed as if some new agitation had seized the beloved invalid, whose burning fever daily increased, while she talked so incessantly, rapidly and deliriously, that it became impossible to distinguish a word. In calmer moments, there was in the aspect of Beatrice a look of anxious dejection, which she appeared unable for a moment to throw off. Her eye followed Lady Edith with an expression of more ardent affection than ever, but mingled with a look of almost compassionate sympathy for which it was impossible to account.

Sir Allan came several times a day to inquire at the door for Beatrice, and mingled with his almost despairing anxiety for the sufferer was a look of affectionate commiseration for Lady Edith herself, which startled and perplexed her. Lord Iona alone, of all those around, seemed perfectly natural

and perfectly comprehensible, for he almost besieged the door, for ever on the alert to ascertain the latest intelligence, and for ever keeping his hopes up to certainties, that she must speedily recover, saying, "If she has fair play, and they do not drive her delirious with their clandestine intrigues, Miss Farinelli will do well. There is a spring of life in the young that can do battle with almost any amount of illness, and who ever had more perfect health till now than Miss Farinelli? What I want to know is, how she has been frightened or worried into this fever. Depend upon it, Lady Edith, this illness is Father Eustace-ism in some way or other, and never rest till you wring out the truth. Probably some vision or apparition has been got up, by means of a magic lantern and phosphorus to convert her. They tried it all upon me abroad, but I am ghost-proof and detected all their pious frauds. Not a string or a pulley escaped my notice. The gorgeous dresses, Latin canticles, and theatrical processions were all thrown away upon my simple taste and feelings."

"You had good English eyes of the old school, wearing the spectacles of sound sense and Protestant judgment," replied Lady Edith, smiling kindly at Lord Iona's rattle-pated humour. "A fashionable clergyman used to boast once, that he had a satin and velvet congregation, but abroad people have a satin and velvet religion, all made up of painting and music, dress and attitudes."

“On some minds dress has an incredible effect,” observed Lord Iona. “What would Lord Burleigh’s nod be without his wig, and what would Father Eustace be without his tonsure? It requires a great mind, like my own, to rise above the influence of embroidered robes, gorgeous images, and finely decorated processions. When the present Pope fled as a footman to Gaeta, the mob at Rome threw nearly an hundred cardinals’ hats into the Tiber. These floated down the stream two and two, slowly, in such solemn procession that one could not but fancy the venerable cardinals were underneath; but these majestic hats are so accustomed to go in procession that, even out of their own element, they fall into line quite instinctively. I often wish that by putting on another man’s hat, I could put on his thoughts and ideas for the moment and know all that is in his head!”

“I wish you could in that case put on Father Eustace’s,” replied Lady Edith, thoughtfully. “Who can ever read the mysterious mind of that man? It would puzzle Lavater himself to find any expression in his countenance, and like the Upas-tree, does he not cast a blight upon all he looks on? Poor Bessie McRonal, once bright, fresh, and cheerful as any wild flower on a hedge, but now evidently sinking into an early grave,—Robert Carre utterly crushed in every honest-hearted hope he cherished of earthly happiness,—Allan

McAlpine, too, and my own beloved Beatrice! It is a fearful wreck!"

Lady Edith's voice grew low and impressive, she slowly sunk upon a chair, covered her face with her hands, and seemed for some moments utterly overwhelmed, while Lord Iona paced rapidly up and down the room like a caged lion, his eyes flashing with excitement, and his whole countenance indicating irrepressible agitation. He paused at length, and his countenance had assumed a look of calm solemn determination, when he said, in accents of recovered composure, "This shall not last! Be the consequences what they may, my father must explain himself. Either Father Eustace or I leave this house to-morrow. We have been too long under the same roof already. I have had the presumption to fancy that everything and everybody shall be set right by me, but hitherto I have been merely a well-intentioned fool," said Lord Iona, in a tone of self-depreciation; "but for the sake of Beatrice Farinelli what could I not be? when did my heart ever cease to hope? and without her my life hereafter would be one long and melancholy blank, —one ceaseless thought of the only being I ever could truly love. Lady Edith, from this hour you shall see me a new man entirely."

"I am not sure if you shall have my consent to so entire a change!" said Lady Edith, kindly holding out her hand to Lord Iona, as he was

about to withdraw. "My old acquaintance, Mr. Cornelius O'Brien, had so much good and agreeable in him that I positively forbid the metamorphosis. No! Lord Iona, I have a great love of what is genuine, and I am an implicit believer in you. Assist me, then, to rescue those I love from their present thralldom, and no language could ever express the gratitude I shall feel."

"I would lay down my life to merit it, by serving Miss Farinelli," replied Lord Iona with deep emotion. "Yes! it may cost me much, if half what I have lately conjectured be true. Yesterday, Lady Edith, I gained access to that delirious girl, McRonald, who made me open the eyes of astonishment with all she said. I afterwards conversed with that heart-broken man, Robert Carre. Poor fellow,—in his awkwardness and agitation during our interview, I am sure he must have bitten his gloves to tatters, and eaten up an entire Bandana pocket-handkerchief! If all he communicated be true, then ruin and disgrace await this house; but nevertheless, I would tread on red-hot ploughshares that justice may be done.

'I have toy'd too long,
In painted pinnace down the stream of life,
Witch'd with the landscape, while the weary rowers
Faint at the groaning oar. I'll be thy pupil.'"

Lord Iona said these words with agitated rapidity, and before Lady Edith could at all comprehend their import he had vanished from the room. Some

moments afterwards he knocked at the door of Lord Eaglescairn's study, where the father and son continued for several hours shut up together. Evening closed in and the conference still continued, but the louder tones in which it commenced had fallen into the lowest whisper, and when Lord Iona left his father's room his face was lividly pale.

"It is as I feared. That is indeed a stunning blow!" he muttered to himself; "I must probe the story to the bottom, and then, *coute qui coute*, the truth shall be proclaimed on the very house-tops! I will have no concealments, though the dream of my life may never now be realized. My father still holds back something, but it shall be dragged out to the light of day. His terror of Father Eustace is frightful, but the confessor must now become an economist of lies, and not make him tell more for the benefit of Rome than are absolutely necessary, or there are symptoms of rebellion. Fear in this case shall not be, if my father listens to me, the fear of man, but of God, and duty shall be done though it were to make myself a nameless beggar.

'What conscience dictates to be done,
Or warns me not to do;
This teach me more than hell to shun,
That more than heaven pursue.'"

CHAPTER XII.

“ If I am right, thy grace impart,
Still in the right to stay ;
If I am wrong, oh ! teach my heart
To find that better way.”—POPE.

PERHAPS the most startling sound that can be heard in a house by the ear of man is that of a bell ringing suddenly in the dead of night ; and such was the *réveillé* which disturbed every inhabitant of Eaglescain that night about one o'clock. Peal after peal rang through the old castle ; and when all its inmates had hurriedly answered the summons, it was discovered that Lord Eaglescain had been taken dangerously ill. It was a sudden and total collapse of strength with which he had been seized ; and he lay on his bed perfectly conscious, but pale, cold, and feeble, as if life itself were ebbing away for want of fuel to support its vital power.

It is said that every man's house is his castle ; but this is not the case with any house in which a confessor lives, as there he must reign supreme. When Father Eustace anxiously approached his bed, the feeble sufferer turned away with a visible shudder ; but a faint smile lighted up his wan,

almost livid face when Lord Iona approached, to whom he feebly held out his trembling hand. No son could have received such a token of kindness with more ardent affection, but a tear fell upon the hand when Lord Iona grasped it in his own. To see a strong man reduced to the weakness of a child, and a stern, proud nature melted into softness, is a sight that few can witness without emotion, and of those few Lord Iona was not one. He clasped his hand over his face, which was convulsed with agitation, and seated himself by the bed, resolved not to stir from his father's side while life and consciousness remained.

To Lady Edith Tremorne her own position became daily more perplexing, yet with all her ingenuity she could not see her way out of it. From hour to hour every imaginable attention was lavished on Beatrice by Lady Eaglescairn, who stole on tiptoe frequently into the room, and adopted in speaking to her a tone of the most caressing affection. "My dearest, dear, *dear* girl!" was the very least of her endearing expressions to Beatrice every morning when she entered; but to Lady Edith, after a slight, formal curtsy of recognition, as cold and stiff as the North Pole itself, the noble hostess seemed to become perfectly unconscious of her existence.

Lady Edith could not but observe with affectionate emotion how anxiously—most anxiously—Beatrice watched the thermometer of Lady Eaglescairn's civility to her, and that a universal blush overspread the face, arms, and neck of her

young favourite, when the least slight was inflicted on her. It seemed, nevertheless, that Beatrice either had not the strength or the courage to make an audible observation on the subject; but she merely became, if possible, the more eager to evince, when they were alone, her own grateful and most unbounded affection.

When Lady Edith, the morning after Beatrice's illness, took out, as a matter of course, her Bible, that they might as usual read a chapter together, the young invalid fixed her eyes on the well-known, long-loved volume, and her aged friend was surprised to observe that large tears fell slowly from the eyes of Beatrice, as she thoughtfully gazed at the accustomed pages, so long associated in her young heart with all her happiest hours, with all her deepest feelings, with every hope for time as well as for eternity.

As Lady Edith sat with the large old Bible open before her, Beatrice pensively contemplated that noble forehead, the firm yet mild expression of her beautiful mouth, and the perfectly simple elegance of her benevolent aspect, till the entire picture seemed as if Vandyke should have painted such a portrait, and as if even his sublime pencil could scarcely do justice to that mild, earnest countenance, while reading the sentences she loved so well. No nun prostrate on the floor could have felt more truly done with the world, in so far as she was personally concerned; but at the same time, the keenest votary of this world's enjoyment never felt so true a pleasure as she did, when an

opportunity occurred of extending to others the same divinely-written source of consolation and of hope that proved always sufficient for herself.

“Dear Beatrice,” observed Lady Edith, “how pitiable was the case of those unhappy monks in former days, who immured both themselves and this holy book from all mankind! They sternly prohibited sinners such as ourselves from seeking in these enlightened pages for such words of mercy as we are reading now. The young, such as you, they prevented from opening this precious volume, to gather precepts for their future life; the aged, like myself, must not draw from it a lesson how to die. No morning chapter inspired them to enter the busy day with trust in God; no evening lesson expressed their thankfulness for past blessings, or inculcated forgiveness to foes, or charity to those from whom they differed. This is the volume, Beatrice, which I first taught you in early infancy, and which, hereafter, you must read to me when I hover tremblingly on the brink of an eternal world.”

Beatrice seized Lady Edith’s hand, and passionately kissed it, saying, “Your teaching has been my sufficient safeguard in very recent trials. Such prayers as yours are registered for ever on my behalf; but when I hear, as of late, that the intellects of many young ladies have been excited to actual insanity by the awful views of eternity forced clandestinely upon their thoughts by these Popish priests; when I know that several are now necessarily placed in asylums;

when I hear of even poor Bessie M^c Ronald, more fit for a strait waistcoat than for actual everyday life, I do feel, Aunt Edith, that there are trials of my faith awaiting me that call for a double fortification of prayer and of Scripture reading."

"Let us leave this house, Beatrice. No spell can be strong enough to hold us back from our safe, quiet, peaceful home. Oh, that we had never left it!"

Beatrice hid her head in the bed-clothes, and a low, deep sob was her only answer. Hours passed on, and she lay still as a corpse, while Lady Edith, finding that the punctual pony-carriage, so faithfully dedicated to her use, had waited some time, resolved to leave Beatrice to the perfect quiet she so much needed, and herself—wind, weather, and Lady Eaglescairn permitting—to call on old Farmer Carre, who had fervently begged to see her once more before he died.

Whenever Lady Eaglescairn made a favourite arrangement, there was no escape; and she had resolved that Lady Edith should be driven to visit a wet, slippery glen, six miles off; therefore, as usual, it must be so. Mrs. Clinton waited at the door to accompany Lady Edith, all smiles and complaisance, while Mr. Clinton, wearing a white neckcloth, so tight that he seemed practising how to bear being gradually suffocated, stood ready to assist them in, smiling vaguely, without uttering a word; and having touched his hat very dubiously, as if not quite sure if his head were on his shoulders or not, when they drove off stood

absently mooning for some time, in apparently serious contemplation of his gloves.

Scarcely had the two ladies driven more than a mile before Lady Edith suddenly recollected that she had not administered to Beatrice a composing draught which had been most anxiously and most emphatically prescribed for her by Dr. M^cIndre; and having with great difficulty persuaded Mrs. Clinton to let the pony-carriage be turned homewards, she hurriedly re-entered the castle, promising, if Mrs. Clinton would wait two seconds, to return. How long Mrs. Clinton sat in the carriage it would be difficult to say, though it seemed like hours; but Lady Edith never reappeared. Everything has its limits, and nothing narrower limits than the patience of a lady waiting in a cold open carriage; therefore Mrs. Clinton at last gave up the point, and drove off alone, wondering much what could have detained her intended companion.

Lady Edith meanwhile almost ran upstairs to Beatrice's room, but was greatly surprised, the door being ajar, to hear, as she approached, several voices, engaged apparently in low and earnest conversation. As Dr. M^cIndre had specially ordered the most unbroken quiet for his patient, the presence of any one individual would have caused her most unbounded amazement; but this intrusion of more than one seemed to Lady Edith most unaccountable. She remembered now that during the previous day she had found Beatrice, on her return from a temporary absence, looking far from refreshed by the period when she was supposed to

have been lying perfectly quiet. On that occasion, a deep and permanent flush on the cheek of Beatrice had indicated, by its hectic brilliancy, an alarming accession of fever, the suddenness of which had appeared to Lady Edith quite unaccountable, while there was a blazing brightness in her eyes, very different from their usual expression of deep and tender sensibility.

The voice of Lady Eaglescain, speaking in low tones of coaxing persuasion, became distinctly audible now to Lady Edith, who felt panic-struck with astonishment at this unjustifiable conduct, as it at once flashed upon her conviction that these daily airings of her own were all arranged with an intention to take advantage of Beatrice being alone to gain access to her room. How such a deception could have gained the connivance of Beatrice, Lady Edith was at a loss to imagine, so contrary was any concealment to the honest frank-hearted child of her adoption, whose nature had no sympathy with the spirit of that superstition which begins by secrecy and ends in deception.

Lady Edith, always open and above-board, as well as very decided herself, resolved at once to test the whole mystery by appearing in person. Hitherto the tone of Lady Eaglescain's voice and of her companion, whoever he might be, had continued quite inaudible ; but suddenly Lady Edith's whole heart was moved by the most intense emotion, when she heard the clear, young, silvery voice of Beatrice, in reply to some observation of Lady

Eaglescairn's, exclaim in a tone of mournful earnestness :—

“I should not deserve to breathe the breath of life another hour, Lady Eaglescairn, if for one brief moment I could conceive it possible to give up Aunt Edith, to break her heart, and to forsake her faith ! To that kind benefactress I owe much more than life ; and may life itself depart from me before I forget it. Her religion is mine. For its principles and for her I am ready to relinquish everything in existence, or even existence itself.”

“We must give you time,” replied Lady Eaglescairn, in a caressing tone ; “Rome was not built in a day, and no more can the Roman Catholic faith be embraced in an hour ; but there can be no harm in your hearing what we have to urge. As my exemplary friend, Mrs. Lorraine, long since informed you, mine is no ordinary offer. My son's affections are devotedly yours, but not our consent while you remain a heretic. But I can give you a name of your own that would make your alliance an honour to him ; I can at a single sentence, and I will, if you say that word, produce a transformation from your present miserable state of dependence as an anonymous foundling, to one of the highest condition in this country. Now or never is your time, then, to choose rank, fortune, distinction, and every earthly luxury, or to cast them away, never to be recalled. Consider !”

“Lady Eaglescairn,” replied Beatrice, in a tone faint and low from extreme emotion, “your offer requires no consideration ; it never did. The

difference of religion is one for which many have died—for which I am ready to forfeit all. It is with sorrow that I do so, but with no hesitation. Under Aunt Edith I have never known what you speak of—‘a miserable dependence.’ Oh no! never one momentary annoyance that she could save me. Never! How much rather I would suffer any trial than ever hurt her kind and generous feelings!”

Lady Eaglescairn’s attention was at this moment attracted by a slight sound, and looking hurriedly up, she saw before her the calm and mournful countenance of Lady Edith, with tears of very solemn emotion filling her expressive eyes, while she silently contemplated the scene before her. Beatrice, who had not yet perceived the entrance of her aged friend, was lying back on the pillow, a burning hectic glowing on her cheek, and her large lustrous eyes looking upwards with a glance of intense devotion,—which appeared in that lovely young countenance almost sublime,—so pure, so angelic that she seemed scarcely a being of earthly mould. Lady Eaglescairn had taken her hand, which she still held, with a look intended to be affectionate, and beside her sat an individual with his arms folded, his head down, and his whole face concealed; but when the entrance of Lady Edith caused him to look up, she with increased astonishment recognised Father Ambrose. A long silence ensued on all sides; but Lady Edith, having advanced to the bedside, and kissed Beatrice, who gave her a faint smile of gratified affection, then turned to Father Ambrose, and said,

in a tone of calm determination, "I need only point to that fevered countenance as a sufficient reason for requesting the absence of all strangers. Lady Eaglescain, you are now doing what your own dreadful religion inculcates as a duty. That creed enjoins you, at every sacrifice of honour, hospitality, or kindness, to make proselytes. I forgive this attempt the more readily, as a kind Providence has rendered it unsuccessful. This is no time, however, for discussion, as my Beatrice requires rest and composure. It is at the risk of her life that she has been thus agitated; let me therefore close the curtains now, and remain with her alone."

A strange, almost triumphant smile gleamed in the eyes of Mr. Ambrose, as, with a courteous bow to Lady Edith, he stealthily, silently, but rapidly disappeared out of the room; and Lady Eaglescain seemed quite absorbed in the occupation of removing a speck of dust from her dress as she slowly followed, muttering to herself, "If my son should die of the disappointment, he never shall marry that girl while she adheres to Lady Edith. Never! Yet what may be the fatal consequences to us all if he does not!"

Lady Edith's attachment to Beatrice was the exalted affection of a powerful mind without one thought for herself; but in the silence and darkness of her long attendance in the sick-room, she had ample time to meditate on her own difficult position, living within the very house of those whom she had detected in a design to steal from her the

intercourse. Beatrice often leaned her head now on the shoulder of Lady Edith, or clasped Lady Edith's hand in her own, while tears, wrung from her evidently by the deepest anguish, sprung into her eyes, and there seemed in her manner a sort of remorseful gratitude, a sort of sympathising concern for Lady Edith herself, as if some undeveloped misfortune were impending over her benefactress, which could be neither averted nor explained.

On mentioning this circumstance to Lord Iona, he expressed the most anxious solicitude that Lady Edith would probe it to the very bottom, as he evidently saw there was some scheme in agitation, which his father was under promise to conceal, and which eluded all his efforts to discover; and Lady Edith, in consequence, observing Beatrice one day unusually revived in bodily strength, but greatly depressed in mind, unable longer to postpone her anxiety, said with an expression of affectionate reproach, "My dear Beatrice! something weighs down your spirits to the very earth, yet I — once your only friend — must watch in silent suspense, without being told what your sorrow is! My dear child, why are not our hearts one, as in happier days? Formerly, my aged experience could assist you, while your joyous affection enlivened me. This would have been a wide and empty world to me without you! Who but yourself could have cheered my broken heart and prompted my anxious prayers? Now, dear Beatrice, your health and spirits are extinct, and why? I like direct answers, therefore give me one now.

Can any secret be a right one which must not be confided to your oldest and best friend? I deserve your entire confidence, and none can be your true friends who would deprive me of it."

Beatrice hurriedly snatched Lady Edith's extended hand in her own, clasped it to her lips, and drenched it with tears, which rolled unheeded down her cheek; but in this burst of passionate emotion, she did not, or could not articulate a word, and Lady Edith, having waited some moments in anxious suspense, mournfully added, while observing with astonishment the convulsive working of that beautiful young countenance,—

"This all seems to me a painful, an incredible dream. You cannot wonder, dear Beatrice, if I feel bewildered, agitated, almost irritated, by seeing you, my child, as you are now. I have read in old books of Popish intrigues, but that fears and uncertainties, such as now oppress me, should ever come into my own neighbourhood, into my own home, into my own heart, Beatrice, into my very deepest affections, is overwhelming. We seem in a new world now! During my own youth all was fair, open, and above-board. Then there was no masquerading, but all knew what were the faith and feelings of all with whom they were intimate; but now, young people approach those they love and ought to trust, with a mask over their very hearts. Be open with your old friend, Beatrice!" exclaimed Lady Edith, her own strong mind for once giving way; and covering her face with her hands, she wept, saying in accents of

trembling anxiety,—“What is the spell over you? Say something, Beatrice, as a guide to my fears! Anything would be a relief. Every evil that can possibly befall my child presents itself by turns before my thoughts. Let me but know that there is only one distinct evil, and great as that may be, I can bear it. Am I still to grope on in total darkness about you, Beatrice,—sometimes indignant that you should be betrayed into withdrawing your confidence from one who loves you as I do,—sometimes fearing that you have been ensnared by some network of deceit, from which none can deliver you. Speak, my own beloved Beatrice, and say—whatever you can say.”

“It will break my heart if you are so kind,” said Beatrice, while tears fell in torrents from her eyes, and dropped on the floor. Her whole expression and attitude indicated the very prostration of helpless sorrow, and the entire energy of her soul seemed extinct. Lady Edith gazed at the pallid face before her, with a look of interrogatory anxiety, which became gradually one of deepening apprehension, and of increasing anguish. Beatrice was no ordinary girl in respect to the promptitude and decision of her energetic mind, but now there was no vigour even in her grief. It seemed to Lady Edith like the helpless abandonment of one who could but suffer and die. A few short weeks before, and who had ever appeared in a more brilliant flush of health and happiness, fervent in her affections, keen in her enjoyments, gay in her anticipations, useful in her employments, and open

as the light of day in all her happy thoughts; but now the Papal blight seemed upon her, and Lady Edith, after gazing some moments at the beautiful wreck, mournfully closed her own eyes in silent anxious prayer for help and direction how to act.

“Aunt Edith,” at length faltered Beatrice feebly, but most affectionately resting her forehead on the shoulder of her much-loved benefactress, “my best of all advisers and friends, I need your prayers, and believe me I deserve them as much as I ever did, perhaps more. If I were now speaking to you across my own open grave I could not feel more overawed by my present circumstances. Were I doing wrong, could I—dare I look my benefactress in the face and ask you, as I now do, to pray for me? From you, Aunt Edith, I never failed to find comfort—oh! give me now the consolation of saying you still can trust in my entire affection—that you still can trust in the efficacy of your own former teaching to preserve me from wilful deceit. Appearances are all wrong, but if you could read my heart, dear Aunt Edith, you would see that a duty binds me to silence besides a promise. Feel how my forehead burns with agitation. Does it not scorch you? My circumstances are at present frightfully changed—my heart is not.”

Lady Edith silently but most mournfully embraced the agitated girl. Her hands were burning, her face was lividly pale, and she trembled visibly. After a thoughtful pause of several minutes, Lady Edith said in a tone of very solemn affection,

“You are not, I see, to blame, Beatrice,—but

others are. Who could in fairness tell a young thing like you any secret so important as to wither the bloom off your cheek as I see it now, and yet forbid you the comfort of consulting your oldest, and I need not say your truest friend? That which avoids the light must be evil. I can implicitly trust in your good intentions, my child, but your young judgment may err. It has already erred in giving that promise, but once given—once solemnly pledged—let me not be the person who would ask or wish you to break it. From my earliest years I never was troubled with idle curiosity, and less than ever now. Be very wary, my dearest girl, for yours is the credulity natural to one who has herself no guile. Remember you stand alone in the world, without one legal protector, and therefore protect yourself. The motto of Romanism is ‘Mystery, mystery, mystery;’ and there is about Mr. Ambrose a deep inscrutable darkness never to be fathomed. Do not trust him. Dear Beatrice, above all men on earth distrust that deep and bad man. Whatever happens recollect that nothing can ever alter my affection, or diminish my fervent desire to serve you. By my prayers I can do so now, and perhaps hereafter by my efforts.”

They were clasped in each other’s arms with a fervent embrace—these two so devotedly attached to each other, but neither spoke. Hours flew past while Lady Edith afterwards sat immovable by the bedside of her beloved young invalid, her own heart swelling with suppressed emotion. She at length cautiously looked within the curtains.

Beatrice lay wide awake, and it seemed as if she were engaged in silent prayer. Those prayers could not be more earnest and persevering than Lady Edith's, who felt how sadly strange it was that for the first time, while yet gazing in each other's faces with unchanged affection, an insuperable barrier divided their thoughts.

"We look at each other now as of old, and yet what a change!" said Lady Edith sadly, "neither now dare tell the other all she thinks. I can but wish for my Beatrice the fulfilment of all her own desires, knowing they will certainly be right and good;—not mere happiness in the common estimate, Beatrice, but the happiness of devoted piety, of moderate desires, of peaceful contentment, of much to enjoy, and of much also to bestow, in works of usefulness, charity, and kindness."

"Long, long may these be yours, Aunt Edith!" exclaimed Beatrice fervently, clasping the hand of her benefactress, while it became obvious that a deep conflict was agitating her young mind, too sadly betrayed by the tremulousness of her lip. "To enjoy is mine no longer—it perhaps may never be again. Our old cherished dreams of open-hearted peace and unreserved confidence have ended in a sad sad awakening!"

Beatrice, burying her face in her hands, rested them on her knees, and wept convulsively, swaying her body slightly backwards and forwards, with an expression of passionate grief greater than any circumstance within Lady Edith's wildest conjectures could account for, and while she trembled

for what the mystery might be, already attended with such calamitous results, she felt how truly it is the case that the dearer our ties are to life the more we have to suffer.

Lord Iona meanwhile watched as unwearyingly as ever a deer-stalker watched for his prey, to catch a glimpse of Beatrice, till at length he gained intelligence through the vigilance of his valet that she had obtained from Dr. McIndre permission to pass an hour in the library; therefore, summoning all his courage, he resolved, *coute qui coute*, to snatch an interview with the object of all his affections and thoughts. Affecting to suppose the library as usual quite untenanted, Lord Iona on entering, though with flushed cheek and eager eye, assumed a careless, whistling, off-hand manner, as if he had merely dropped in to search for a book; but on turning to the sofa on which Beatrice reclined, with Lady Edith seated by her side, he could not restrain a burst of passionate emotion and fervent delight on meeting her once again. Never had Beatrice looked so lovely, with the delicate languor of indisposition in her countenance, and yet a look of shy fluttering pleasure as he approached; and Lord Iona sanguinely hoped that in time he might become as dear to her as she already was to him. In a voice faltering with extreme emotion he mustered presence of mind enough at last to speak, saying,

“I need not tell you, Miss Farinelli, for you know it, how happy, how more than happy I am that you are restored to us again,” said Lord Iona, approaching her with an air of the most respectful

animation, "the fact is, in short, that my whole mind is turned topsy-turvy with joy, and though I wish to be on my best—my very best behaviour on this occasion, yet positively I want words to express half the energy of my delight. Speak one word to me, and say that my presence here is not an unwelcome intrusion. I shall detest myself for ever if you have been disturbed by my appearance here."

The vivid carnation which dyed the cheek of Beatrice could not have been matched by any rose in the conservatory, as she smilingly held out her hand to Lord Iona, and accepted a beautiful bouquet, which he professed to have accidentally gathered during an idle hour that morning in the greenhouse. It was with a wonderful effort of taste and genius that he had combined all the most beautiful hues and rarest plants into one splendid mosaic, which might have done honour to a flower-show, and with unmitigated delight that he watched her examining each plant in evident enjoyment, while she smilingly turned to him, saying,—“I am voting you a prodigious grant of gratitude for this considerate attention. To a convalescent invalid like myself these fresh bright blossoms seem a joyous welcome back to life and health.”

“If I have given you a pleasure then let it be written on my tomb-stone, ‘J’ai vecu!’ exclaimed Lord Iona enthusiastically. “That lily of the valley I picked as an emblem of yourself; but what are the points of resemblance deponent saith

not. Those tawdry tulips, with neither honey nor perfume, represent Miss Turton; and those scarlet berries of the deadly nightshade, Father Eustace. Positively that man is getting a sort of condemned-cell aspect that frightens one. I merely asked him where Bessie McRonald was, that she might take a message for me to my mother, and he scowled under those deep dark pent-house eyebrows of his as if I had purposely insulted him. She confesses to him every morning, and therefore why should he not know her whereabouts afterwards? That poor girl is now driven rapidly on to her ruin by the powerful machinery of superstition, which no papist can resist any more than I could resist the inexorable doom of fate."

"Where can they have taken her?" exclaimed Beatrice, in a tone of almost agonized interest; "poor Bessie! She has forsaken her own peaceful, happy, inviolable home, to pursue the merest bubble that ever danced in a sunbeam. What a happy lot hers should have been, and how wretched it is now! Can nothing be done to rescue the poor girl?"

"Have you no clue by which to trace her?" asked Lord Iona reflectively. "My mother always changes the subject now when she is named, and Father Eustace drops it like a hot chestnut. His olive complexion becomes darker, and his eye more stern, when I sometimes jestingly inquire for McRonald's niece, which the old man requested me occasionally to do. I believe Father Eustace suspects that I have accepted in my father's own house the honourable post of a Protestant spy."

For some days Lady Edith had the strength of mind to refrain from alluding to any subject connected with those which so greatly agitated Beatrice, and was more than rewarded by seeing her bodily strength gradually revive, and a lovely tinge of bloom again on her cheek. At length, observing her one morning unusually well, Lady Edith asked whether there could be any harm in her asking Mr. Ambrose himself to explain what were the secret circumstances relating to Beatrice which he professed to know, and she was pleased to perceive the glow of pleasure with which her young favourite entreated her to do so, saying it would be the greatest of comforts to her if all could be at once declared, and that she hoped Mr. Ambrose might feel it impossible to refuse so very reasonable a demand.

Lady Edith was not one who ever postponed a good resolution, and the very next time she saw Mr. Ambrose, accompanied by Sir Allan and Lady Eaglescairn, after exchanging a few words of ordinary courtesy, she said in that gentle voice which was music itself, but which now trembled with anxiety,—“Let me intrude upon your more than common attention, Mr. Ambrose, by requesting an explanation very important to myself. Till this month I have had as entirely the confidence of my young Beatrice as you have of your nephew; but very recently, for the first time in her life, she has become reserved to me on one subject, and attributes that most unusual reserve to your injunctions. I ask, therefore, in the presence of Sir

not. Those tawdry tulips, with neither honey nor perfume, represent Miss Turton; and those scarlet berries of the deadly nightshade, Father Eustace. Positively that man is getting a sort of condemned-cell aspect that frightens one. I merely asked him where Bessie McRonald was, that she might take a message for me to my mother, and he scowled under those deep dark pent-house eyebrows of his as if I had purposely insulted him. She confesses to him every morning, and therefore why should he not know her whereabouts afterwards? That poor girl is now driven rapidly on to her ruin by the powerful machinery of superstition, which no papist can resist any more than I could resist the inexorable doom of fate."

"Where can they have taken her?" exclaimed Beatrice, in a tone of almost agonized interest; "poor Bessie! She has forsaken her own peaceful, happy, inviolable home, to pursue the merest bubble that ever danced in a sunbeam. What a happy lot hers should have been, and how wretched it is now! Can nothing be done to rescue the poor girl?"

"Have you no clue by which to trace her?" asked Lord Iona reflectively. "My mother always changes the subject now when she is named, and Father Eustace drops it like a hot chestnut. His olive complexion becomes darker, and his eye more stern, when I sometimes jestingly inquire for McRonald's niece, which the old man requested me occasionally to do. I believe Father Eustace suspects that I have accepted in my father's own house the honourable post of a Protestant spy."

For some days Lady Edith had the strength of mind to refrain from alluding to any subject connected with those which so greatly agitated Beatrice, and was more than rewarded by seeing her bodily strength gradually revive, and a lovely tinge of bloom again on her cheek. At length, observing her one morning unusually well, Lady Edith asked whether there could be any harm in her asking Mr. Ambrose himself to explain what were the secret circumstances relating to Beatrice which he professed to know, and she was pleased to perceive the glow of pleasure with which her young favourite entreated her to do so, saying it would be the greatest of comforts to her if all could be at once declared, and that she hoped Mr. Ambrose might feel it impossible to refuse so very reasonable a demand.

Lady Edith was not one who ever postponed a good resolution, and the very next time she saw Mr. Ambrose, accompanied by Sir Allan and Lady Eaglescain, after exchanging a few words of ordinary courtesy, she said in that gentle voice which was music itself, but which now trembled with anxiety,—“Let me intrude upon your more than common attention, Mr. Ambrose, by requesting an explanation very important to myself. Till this month I have had as entirely the confidence of my young Beatrice as you have of your nephew; but very recently, for the first time in her life, she has become reserved to me on one subject, and attributes that most unusual reserve to your injunctions. I ask, therefore, in the presence of Sir

Allan and Lady Eaglescain, by what right you exercise any secret influence over a girl whom you scarcely know? By what right, Mr. Ambrose, do you suddenly place yourself between me and the child of my adoption, who cannot remember one hour of her life till now, during which we were not of one mind and of one heart?

Lady Edith stopped, for her voice refused its office; and Sir Allan, after giving her a glance of respectful sympathy, or rather of sorrowful commiseration, fixed his large eyes on Mr. Ambrose with an intensity of interest, as if he would have looked him through; but who could have looked through the depths of such a mind as Mr. Ambrose's? His colour remained unaltered, his eye perfectly calm, and his voice as bland as ever, while apparently occupied in laboriously cutting up the pages of a new book, and cheerfully answering,—

“My very dear Madam, we all know the obligations of Miss Farinelli to your brother's memory, and that for his sake you befriended her while she needed friends. Reasons of paramount importance prevent me from explaining myself fully at present; but I have discovered her family in Spain, and she will very soon be no longer dependant on the bounty of a generous benefactress, who can perhaps ill afford a longer trespass on her liberality.”

“What I can afford need be no subject of consideration, Mr. Ambrose, to any one but myself. Between Beatrice and me it never was thought

of—never named till this moment. Your civilities now remind me of those who used to poison their enemies with perfumed gloves and sugar plums. Setting aside, therefore, entirely what needs no comment,—what proof has Beatrice, or any one interested for her, that you have, as you mention, discovered her real connexions?”

“Perhaps, Lady Eaglescain, you will testify for me that I am no imposter,” said Mr. Ambrose, assuming a light jocular tone and a look of humorous gravity, though his eyes flashed fire for a moment; “Allan, say one word for your uncle, ‘honest, sober, and trustworthy.’”

“Mr. Ambrose,” said Lady Edith, in a low earnest voice, for she was thoroughly alarmed by observing that the countenance of Sir Allan had become deeply depressed while he fixed his eye on herself with a look of affectionate compassion for which it was impossible to account, “you have a legitimate right to the influence you assume over Sir Allan, being your own nephew; but what is your right to become first in the confidence of my adopted child?”

“If we come to talk of rights in relation to Miss Farinelli, neither you nor I, Lady Edith, have any legal claim over her,” answered Mr. Ambrose, speaking in a slow determined voice, which sounded deep and solemn like a cathedral bell, while Sir Allan with an agitated step hurried to the window as if unable to control what he would have said in support of Lady Edith. “There are circumstances connected with that interesting found-

ling not at present to be fully explained. As to the propriety of some disclosures being made to her, and not to others, I have satisfied Lady Eagles-cairn, in whose house she is a guest, and, therefore, of course, under her protection now. Allan also knows all, and approves —— ”

For a moment the young Chief looked startled and perplexed at this evidently unexpected appeal to himself. He glanced doubtfully first at Mr. Ambrose, and then at Lady Edith, who sat pale as death with astonishment and perplexity. Sir Allan hesitated, and was about to speak, when the powerful eye of his uncle became fastened upon him, and seemed to claim implicit obedience. Then the light of intellectual energy became gradually extinguished in Sir Allan's countenance, his looks became vaguely fixed on the ground, and he remained silent while Mr. Ambrose said to him in a commanding tone, “ You surely remember that interesting narrative I gave you in the summer-house this morning ! ”

“ Allan,” said Lady Edith, in a low agitated voice, and with a penetrating look, “ was the secret of Mr. Ambrose one that you thought Beatrice should act upon without any advice from those she is accustomed to consult ? ”

Sir Allan attempted to reply, but the words died on his lips, and a deep scarlet stain burned on his cheeks. He appeared evidently under a perfect prostration of distress and perplexity; but the vow of obedience seemed upon him, for he made no sign, and turned mournfully away, unable even to look

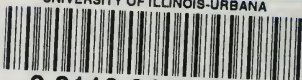
up; but as it by no means suited Mr. Ambrose's convenience to be affronted at what Lady Edith said, he was not, and looked as if she had spoken what was unwelcome in an unknown tongue.

Lady Edith with an air of dignified resignation now slowly rose to leave the room, and gave as she did so one deliberate look at each of the countenances present. Lady Eaglescairn, with a slight accession of colour, had resumed her usual look of empty self-importance, and occupied herself in laboriously drawing on and buttoning a pair of very tight gloves. Sir Allan was leaning his head on the window-sill in an attitude of apparently hopeless depression, and Mr. Ambrose, who had such a fund of civility that he found some even to spare for Lady Edith, wore his most polite and submissive smile. He opened the door as she withdrew, and bowed her out of the room, with an expression of the most unlimited respect, and looking as if he had really granted every wish of her heart.

END OF VOL. II.



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 042041597

